

"In the Latter Days, the sun shall rise from the West"

Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)



Natural Disasters

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The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community



Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as)



AHMADIYYA
MUSLIM COMMUNITY

United States of America

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a religious organization, international in its scope, with branches in 207 countries in Africa, North America, South America, Asia, Australia, and Europe. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was established in 1889 by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) (1835-1908) in Qadian, a small and remote village in the Punjab province of India. He claimed to be the expected reformer of the latter days, the Awaited One of the world community of religions (The Mahdi and Messiah).

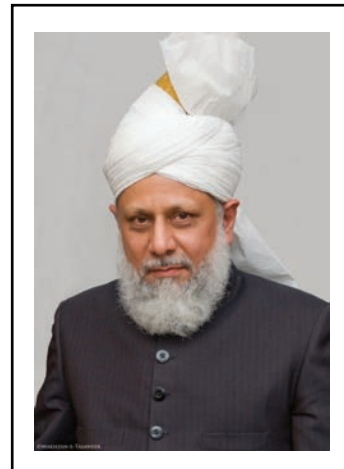
The Movement he started is an embodiment of the benevolent message of Islam – peace, universal brotherhood, and submission to the Will of God – in its pristine purity.

Hazrat Ahmad (as) proclaimed Islam as the religion of man: “The religion of the people of the right path” (The Holy Qur'an: 98:6). The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was created under divine guidance with the objective to rejuvenate Islamic moral and spiritual values. It encourages interfaith dialogue, diligently defends Islam and tries to correct misunderstandings about Islam in the West. It advocates peace, tolerance, love and understanding among followers of different faiths. It firmly believes in and acts upon Qura'nic teaching:

“There is no compulsion in religion” (The Holy Qur'an: 2:257).

Ahmadiyya Muslim Community strongly rejects violence and terrorism in any form and for any reason.

Community has been headed by his elected successors. The present Head of the Community, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, was elected in 2003. His official title is Khalifatul Masih V or Fifth Successor of the Promised Messiah (as).



Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad,
Khalifatul Masih V (aba)

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Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq (ra) was the first Ahmadiyya Muslim missionary to arrive in America. In 1921, he founded the Muslim Sunrise, which stands today as the longest running Muslim publication in America. The magazine seeks to open discussions on Islam and topics relating to religion in general. It highlights the role of Islam in an ever-changing global society. It provides a platform for public opinion on contemporary issues and presents their solutions from an Islamic perspective.

The Muslim Sunrise welcomes letters to the Editor, Questions and Submissions.

Email us at MuslimSunrise@Ahmadiyya.us or go online to www.MuslimSunrise.com



Acronyms for salutations used in this publication

- sa: Sallallahu 'Alaihi Wa Sallam (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)
as: 'Alaihis-Salam (may peace be upon him)
ra: Radhi-Allahu 'Anhu/'Anha (may Allah be pleased with him/her)
rh: Rahimahullahu Ta'ala (may Allah shower His mercy on him)
aba: Ayyadahullahu Ta'ala Bi-Nasrihil-'Aziz (may Allah support him with His mighty help)

Verse numbers in the references from the Holy Qur'an count Tasmiya at the beginning of a chapter as the first verse.

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Muslims follow the name of God's prophets with the prayer *alaihis salaam* or 'may peace be upon him', and for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* or 'may peace and blessings of God be upon him.' Companions of prophets and righteous personalities who have passed away are saluted by *radhi-Allaho anhu/a* or 'may Allah be pleased with him/her.' While such salutations sometimes are not set out in the text for readability, we encourage readers to offer these prayers as if set out in full.

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FROM THE HOLY QUR'AN

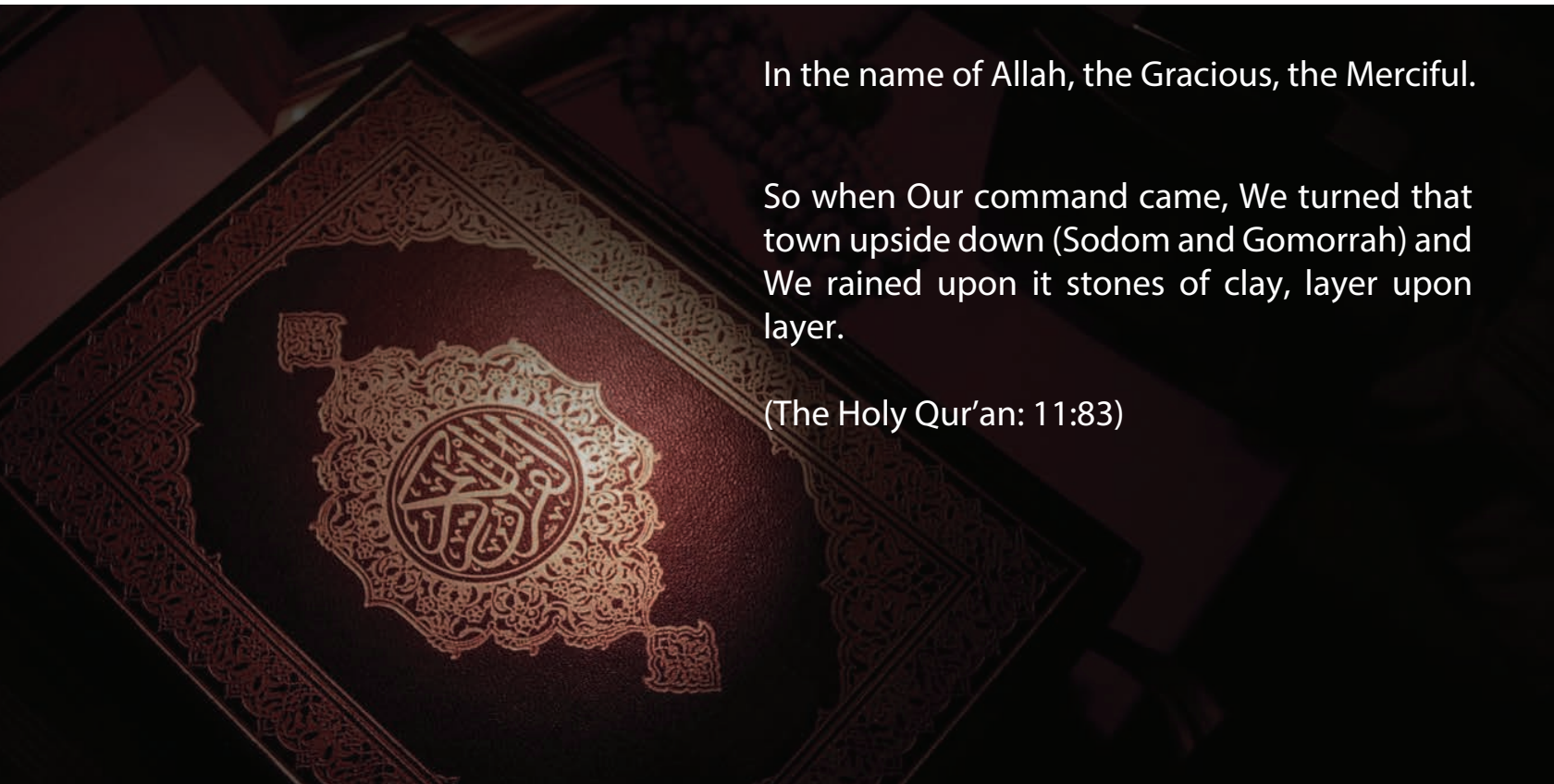
بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ①

فَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا جَعَلْنَا عَالِيَهَا سَافِلَهَا
وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهَا حِجَارَةً مِّنْ سِجِّيلٍ
مَّنْصُودٍ ②

In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.

So when Our command came, We turned that town upside down (Sodom and Gomorrah) and We rained upon it stones of clay, layer upon layer.

(The Holy Qur'an: 11:83)



HADITH

SAYINGS OF THE

PROPHET

MUHAMMAD (sa)

Hazrat Zainab bint Jahsh, the Mother of the faithful, relates: "The Holy Prophet (sa) came in one day greatly concerned and said: 'There is none worthy of worship save Allah. Woe unto the Arabs from the evil that is approaching. A breach has been made in the wall holding back Gog and Magog of this size and he made a circle of his thumb and forefinger.' I said to him: 'Messenger of Allah, shall we be destroyed while there are a number of the righteous among us?' He said: 'Yes; when evil becomes widespread.'"

(Bukhari, kitabul fitn (Book of Trials)
bab Quulannabi (sa) vailal'arab min sharri
qad iqtarab, p 2/1046 (Chapter: the Prophet's statement: 'Woe to the Arabs from an evil that has approached')

EDITORIAL

WINTER 2017

In late August, 2017, I was in Houston, Texas, when the tropical cyclone Hurricane Harvey hit it, and hit it hard, causing widespread flooding all over the metropolitan area. Within four days, 50 inches of rain poured down and the flooding was catastrophic. It destroyed hundreds of thousands of houses, displaced more than 32,000 people, causing more than 200 billion dollars of damage.

Similar are the stories of natural disasters in many other areas all over the world. Tsunamis, earthquakes, avalanches, tornadoes, wildfires, landslides and draughts bringing about human suffering and property damage at very large scale and many hazards to human health and environment. Human response to such disasters varies from place to place. In some areas, the help reaches too late, and at other places it is immediate and collective. The good point is that mostly humanity gets united and rallies around the victims of natural disasters to help. There are many international disaster relief organizations that respond immediately and provide medical, financial and emotional help. Thousands of volunteers take part, and use their special skills to reduce the hurt and the harm.

Usually, a natural disaster is called an 'act of God.' Sometimes questions are asked why God allows human suffering at such a large scale, and why many innocent lives are either taken away or made to go through heartbreaking suffering. The holy Scriptures of many faith traditions also contain stories of natural disasters and usually they are depicted as punishments to the sinful.

In this issue of the Muslim Sunrise, we have tried to cover various aspects of natural disasters, including articles on the natural disasters mentioned in the Holy Scriptures and the end of the world through the most catastrophic disaster.

We hope you will find the articles insightful and will give us your feedback.

Mubasher Ahmad
Editor-in-Chief



IN THE WORDS OF THE PROMISED MESSIAH^(as)

Comprehensiveness of the Holy Qur'an
[Chashma-e-Masihi, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 20, pp. 346-347]



Almighty has, for the chastisement of the wicked, prophesied through me the occurrence of a great and terrible earthquake which will destroy them.



Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian,
The Promised Messiah and Imam Mahdi (as)

The holy and perfect teaching is that of the Holy Qur'an which nourishes every branch of the human tree. The Qur'an does not stress only one side. Sometimes it urges forgiveness and forbearance on condition that they should be appropriate, and sometimes on proper occasions, it directs the punishment of an offender. In truth the Holy Qur'an is a picture of the Divine law of nature, which is visible everywhere. It is perfectly reasonable that the word of God and the work of God should be in accord with each other, that is to say, as the work of God Almighty appears in the world, the true Book of God should teach in accordance with that work, and not that His work should manifest one thing and His word should manifest something else. We observe in God's work that there is not always forgiveness and forbearance but that He punishes offenders with diverse types of chastisement. Such punishment is mentioned in the previous Books also. Our God is not only Compassionate but is also Wise and His torment is great. The True Book is the one which is in accord with this law of nature, and the True Word of God is that which is not inconsistent with His work. We do not find that God has treated His creation always with compassion and forbearance and that there is no chastisement. Even today, God



Friday Sermon delivered by

**Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad,
Khalifatul Masih V (aba), on Feb 17, 2017**

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (aba) said that generally, people in the world are steeped in materialism. There is a race to attain worldly pursuits and turmoil has ensued as a result. God the Almighty and religion are given secondary importance. A growing number in the world deny the existence of God the Almighty altogether. However, there are others who long to find and join the true religion. They pray restlessly to find the means to connect to God the Almighty. Such persons are guided by God the Almighty. Their faith is strengthened by Him. Allah the Almighty as was His promise, sent the Promised Messiah and Imam Mahdi in this age to reconnect people with God the Almighty. Mankind was informed that if they wanted inner peace and the means to true worship – they should accept this Chosen One of God. God Almighty guides people who have a thirst to find the truth in astonishing ways. Both the past and present of Ahmadiyyat testify to this way of God. Daily incidents of this nature occur around the world. Such accounts increase the faith of those who join Ahmadiyyat – the True Islam – but also such accounts become faith inspiring for born Ahmadis, or Ahmadis of old. Today Huzoor related numerous accounts of how people in search of the true religion and God the Almighty were guided by God. A 65 year old lady in The Gambia suffered from foot pains for 10 years and failed to find a cure to her ailment. She was unable to walk. She went to a far off village from her home for treatment. By chance she heard Huzoor's Friday Sermon on MTA there. On

return home she was told in a dream that 'the one you saw on TV is the one you should follow because he is telling you the real way to salvation'. She took the Bai'at (oath of allegiance) and after, the pain in her feet gradually subsided. She now preaches to others and tells them how the blessings of the Jama'at (Ahmadiyya Community) alleviated the physical suffering in her foot. A worldly person will feel that this lady was ignorant and uneducated and simply delusional. However those who personally experience the guidance of Allah the Almighty are given immense and unwavering faith and care not. In a far-flung area of Burkina Faso an individual is guided by God the Almighty. Suado Sahib accepted Ahmadiyat after Jalsa Germany. He regularly listened to the Ahmadiyya radio and when Ahmadis visited his village, although being a non-Ahmadi, he would help arrange their preaching efforts. Maulvies (Muslim clerics) warned him to never listen to the Ahmadi radio nor to have any contact with Ahmadis, if he wanted to save his belief in Islam. Incited by the clerics, he stopped listening to the Ahmadiyya radio or meeting any Ahmadis. However by chance once on a journey he broke for prayer and the only place to pray was an Ahmadi mosque, and so he was forced to pray with them. Allah opened the way for him to reconnect with Ahmadis. Later in a dream he saw thousands of people who surround one man. He is told in the dream this is the person who he should listen to – and that Maulvies (clerics) are steering him away from the right path. When later he went to the

mission house he saw on TV the exact same scene and person in his dream (it was the concluding session of the Jalsa and Huzoor delivering the address). Such people who personally experience the signs of God are given strong faith by Him. Huzoor said people write to him and say that no one can ever deter them from Ahmadiyyat because they have done the Bai'at (pledge of allegiance) after witnessing clear signs and proofs from Allah the Almighty. Allah the Almighty guides those who adopt humility and compassion, and if they avail from this guidance then subsequently they become the recipients of Allah the Almighty's grace. A similar incident was experienced by Ahmad Sahib from Syria wherein he was guided by Allah the Almighty to the truth. He used to oppose the Jama'at (Community) and would discuss various religious matters with some Ahmadi friends but could not tolerate the idea of the death of Jesus (as). One of the Ahmadi friends, Mutazil Qazaq Sahib, told him to seek guidance from Allah the Almighty regarding this issue. He fervently prayed that night and saw a person in his dream who saved him from falling into a deep pit and said, 'Abu Hasan! [his filial appellation] Do not come here ever again and know that Jesus (as) has passed away.' When he woke up from his dream, he went to Qazaq Sahib's house and upon entering saw a picture. He enquired about the picture and was told that this was the picture of the Promised Messiah (as). Ahmad Sahib immediately said that he wished to do the Bai'at (oath of allegiance) as this was the person who he saw in his dream. Huzoor said that Allah the Almighty guides people to the truth through many different means, sometimes through dreams, at other times through Ahmadi preaching to them, through reading our literature, by witnessing the high moral conduct of Ahmadi, or many people these days are accepting Ahmadiyyat through MTA. A missionary from Benin writes that a chief of the local area was initially an idolater but accepted Ahmadiyyat after receiving the message of Islam. Not only did he become an Ahmadi, but now also preaches the message of Islam to others. A mosque was opened in his area and on the occasion of its inauguration he also delivered a speech and Huzoor read out some extracts from it. In it the chief said that he cannot understand why non-Muslims oppose the Ahmadiyya Community. The Ahmadiyya Community only

preaches about love, peace and brotherhood and further stated that he wished he could build a house beside the mosque and tell everyone passing that Ahmadiyyat is the true Islam. The chief said when Ahmadi are bringing Christians and idolaters to the fold of Islam, there is nothing to feel pained by. He further said that if a Christian were to come to this mosque for worship, he would not be stopped. Huzoor said that on the one hand, we have religious leaders who carry out injustices and cause Muslims to shed the blood of one another due to their own arrogance and egos. However, on the other hand there are people who were idolaters and Allah the Almighty guided them due to some good deed of theirs or simply out of His sheer grace and enabled them to now propagate the message of true Islam to others. This is the way Allah the Almighty treats those who are humble, but if one is full of arrogance then even if he offers thousands of prayers and claims to be pious and even calls himself a 'Hajji' (one who performs the Hajj), he cannot receive true guidance from Allah the Almighty. One of our missionary relates an incident of how people are guided by Allah the Almighty and the revolutionary change that takes place in them after accepting Ahmadiyyat: This is an account that took place in Cameroon. A retired army officer donated a plot of land for the Jama'at (Community) to use to construct a mosque. When the Jama'at (Community) officials went to visit the site, they discovered that a basement had already been constructed and the gentlemen intended to build his house on top of it. The army officer explained that he saw his late father in a dream in which he advised him to build a mosque instead of a house. Hence, he decided to donate the land to the Jama'at (Ahmadiyya Community). Then a gentleman by the name Saeedo Sahib, who lives in a remote village of the Ivory Coast stated that Islam reached his village through his grandfather, however, over time people slowly moved away from Islam altogether. Eventually people remained Muslims only by name. He stated that he would often pray to God Almighty in anguish for true Islam to be practiced there once again. In 2016, in the blessed month of Ramadhan he was praying on one occasion to the extent that his eyes began to swell up with tears. Only a few days after this incident, a missionary of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community came to the village

and introduced the Ahmadiyya Community. This was a faith inspiring incident for Saeed Sahib and after this visit 55 individuals accepted Ahmadiyyat. Huzoor stated that it is a matter to contemplate that people in developed countries are abandoning religion and focusing solely on worldly pursuits, whereas a remote village in a far off country in Africa, which does not have any luxuries is longing for the true teachings of Islam to be spread in their village. Huzoor stated that it was the duty of every Ahmadi to spread the true teachings of Islam to every individual. Huzoor then read an extract from the Promised Messiah (as) in which the Promised Messiah (as) emphasised that performing the Bai'at [pledge of initiation] is not a matter to be taken lightly. One can only fulfil the pledge of initiation when one forsakes their own existence and becomes completely devoted and sincere. May God Almighty grant steadfastness to all those who are entering into this fold. May God Almighty grant us the opportunity to establish a connection with Him and may we never become the source for another to waver in his faith.



Promised Messiah's (as) Prophecies about Natural Disasters

Attiya T. Ghani

In late August, Hurricane Harvey made landfall between Port Aransas and Port O'Connor, Texas, as a Category 4 storm with winds of 130 mph. The storm flooded Houston in over 4 feet of water and affected millions of residents with hurricane-force winds knocking down trees, power poles and signs. Then we had another monster storm, Irma labeled as Category 5 along with two other storms Jose and Katia. Irma made its landfall in the northern Caribbean islands almost obliterating the island of Barbuda as well as devastating Puerto Rico. Irma was one of the strongest Atlantic hurricanes ever recorded which brought about severe destruction.

While powerful hurricanes were devastating the Caribbean islands as well as the southern coast of the US, wildfires in the northwest United States had a serious effect in some locations in California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana. In South Asia, more than 1200 died, while millions have been forced from their homes and 18,000 schools shut down across the region from flooding caused by heavy monsoon rains. Around the same time an earthquake of magnitude 8.1 struck off the southern coast of Mexico, and killed at least 26 people. Natural disasters in the last century have exceeded all previous records and it is a cause for concern. Whenever any natural disaster occurs in the world, those who fear God are frightened lest any such future calamity puts them in difficulty, or that any act of theirs may become a source of God's displeasure. Such thinking is only of true believers who have the perception that God exists and does not need anyone and thus, with fear of God in their hearts, they tread on the paths that lead to His pleasure. God states in the Holy Qur'an: 'Verily, those who, out of fear of their Lord, always stand guard against sins. And those who believe in the Signs of their Lord' (1). Indeed, God does not need anyone and believers should not be like those who remember Him only in times of calamities and return to their unpleasant habits when troubles are over. The Qur'an also states: 'And when waves engulf them like so many coverings, they call upon Allah, being sincere to Him in faith; but when He brings them safe to land, then some of them take the right course. And none denies Our Signs save every perfidious and ungrateful person' (2). A true believer's repentance should be real and constant.

Today, earthquakes, tsunamis, and hurricanes are causing huge destructions, killing people and wiping out large build-

ings and roads. This is because man has forgotten his Creator and diverted his thoughts towards gaining worldly pleasures. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian (as), the awaited reformer of this age, and the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, appeared for ultimate unification of mankind. In 1891, he declared that he is the Messiah and Mahdi whose advent was foretold by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa).

More than hundred years ago, Hazrat Promised Messiah (as) made several prophecies and one of them was about earthquakes, floods and other natural disasters. He said, "Bear in mind that God has informed me time and again about the coming of earthquakes. So be sure that just as there have been earthquakes in America and in Europe, in keeping with the prophecies, so will they occur in different parts of Asia, and some of them will be as terrifying as doomsday. There will be death on such a large scale that rivers will run with blood, and even birds and animals will not escape it. Such destruction will overtake the earth as has not happened since man was born. Most places will be turned upside down as if they had never been inhabited. There will also be other terrible afflictions, both in heaven and earth, and every sensible person will realize that they are no ordinary phenomena, and no trace of them will be found in books of astronomy or philosophy. Then people will be seized by anxiety and they will wonder what is going to happen? Many will be saved, and many will perish. Those days are near; indeed they are at the door, when the world shall witness a spectacle of doomsday. Not only will there be earthquakes, but other terrible calamities will also appear, some from heaven and some from the earth. This will happen because men have given up the worship of their God, and all their thoughts and their designs and their resolves are diverted towards the world. Had I not come, these calamities might have been delayed for a while, but with my coming the secret designs of God's wrath, that had long been hidden, have been manifested. God says in the Quran: 'We never punish until we have sent a Messenger' (3).

Those who repent shall find security and those who fear before the calamity overtakes them will be shown mercy. Do you think that you will be safe from these earthquakes, or that you can save yourselves by your own designs? No, you cannot. All human designs will come to naught that day. Do not imag-

ine that only America has been shaken by the earthquake and that you are safe, for you may experience even greater calamities. O Europe! You are not secure, O Asia! You are not secure; O you who dwell in the Islands, no artificial god will come to your aid. I see the cities falling and I see the habitations in ruin. The One and the Unique has long remained silent. Abominations were committed before His eyes and yet He remained silent. But now He shall reveal His countenance in a dreadful manner. He who has ears to hear, let him hear! The hour is not far. I tried to bring everyone under the security of God, but the decrees of destiny had to be fulfilled. Assuredly, I say that this country's turn is also drawing near. The days of Noah shall appear before your eyes, and you will see with your own eyes what happened to the land of Lot. But God is slow to wrath; repent so that you are shown mercy. He who abandons God is a worm, not a man, and he who does not fear Him is dead, not alive" (4).

The Imam of the age has explained everything clearly and has said that if his words are not heeded it will lead to destruction. Natural disasters all over the world, the economic crises, the chaos of global warming should draw those who make excesses towards God rather than towards vulgarities.



The recent world disasters should be a cautionary sign for us. God is with one who truly honors the due of being His servant. His true servants do not ascribe partners to Him and are not those who only remember Him in difficult, turbulent times and forget Him in peaceful times. They turn to Him with greater intensity in times when they face difficulties or observe climatic changes. Regarding this His Holiness, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba), the worldwide leader of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, stated that, "A true believer continues to call on God after trouble is averted while the ungrateful get embroiled in bad ways. As the blessed model of the Prophet (sa) demonstrated, true believers do not just fear God at the time of their own trouble, rather when affliction falls on others, it instills fear of God in them. Whether the calamities be of the past or current times, if a true believer fears God through the bad ending of ancient people, how much more should the present disasters make one turn to God and fear Him. However, the majority attribute natural disasters to simply climatic changes and laws of nature. It is correct that natural disasters occur due to the laws of nature. Earthquakes happen when the earth's plate tectonics move. It is correct that New Zealand, Japan and many islands are located on plate tectonics and that is why they experience more earthquakes. However, it is also noteworthy that the one commissioned by God in the current age foretold earthquakes"(5).

God, the Almighty is showing these signs again and again in different parts of the world. We, therefore, need to heed these warnings by striving to strengthen our faith and endeavoring to convey to the world the message of the Promised Messiah (as). We should convey his message to the world with the same zeal and enthusiasm as he did. May God enable us to do so. Ameen

References:

1. The Holy Qur'an (23:58-59)
2. The Holy Qur'an (31:33).
3. The Holy Qur'an (17: 16)
4. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as), Haqiqat-ul-Wahi, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol. 22, pp. 268-269 – Essence of Islam, Vo. V, pp. 148 – 150
5. <https://www.alislam.org/friday-sermon/2011-03-18.html>

Destruction of the City of Sodom

Amtul Kafi Yadullah Bhunnoo

Sodom was an ancient city that some archaeologists, on the accounts from the Bible, believe to be in Tall el-Hammam, Jordan. (1) However, the Holy Qur'an places the city to be on the route from Medina to Syria. (2) The city was destroyed at the time of the Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) with its neighboring city Gomorrah. The destruction of these cities is mentioned in the Abrahamic religious scriptures, which include the Torah, Bible, and the Holy Qur'an.

According to the Holy Qur'an, the people of Sodom were so inclined to sin that they robbed people and openly committed crimes unashamedly in their assemblies. They also performed unnatural acts, which were never seen before in the history of humanity that included homosexuality, thus termed Sodomy. This transgression against the commandments of God is evident as Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) said to his people "You commit an abomination which none among mankind has ever committed before you. Do you indeed come lustfully to men and cut off the highway for travelers? Moreover, you commit abomination in your meeting!" However, the only answer of his people was that they said, "Bring upon us the punishment of Allah if thou speakest the truth." Also, the Holy Qur'an states that "the people of Lot rejected the Messengers. When their brother Lot said to them, 'Will you not become righteous? Surely, I am unto you a Messenger, faithful to my trust. So fear Allah, and obey me. Moreover, I ask of you no reward for it. My reward is only with the Lord of the worlds. Do you, of all peoples, approach males, And leave your wives whom your Lord has created for you? Nay, you are people who transgress. They said, 'If thou desist not, O Lot, thou wilt surely be one of the banished ones.'" (3), (4)

Prophet Abraham (as) was told about the destruction of these cities. He was shocked since Prophet Lot (peace be upon him), who was his nephew and contemporary was still in the city (5). Indeed he was reassured by Allah's angels that "We know full well who is there. We will surely save him and his family, except his wife, who is of those who remain behind." (6)

The people of Lot were destroyed by a powerful earthquake which struck repeatedly and completely overtook the city. (7) Wife of Prophet Lot remained behind to try to save some people and naturally was killed during the collapse of the city.

The Biblical account differs with few things from the Holy Qur'an. In the Holy Qur'an, the Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) was told to travel at night with his family as the people of Sodom would be punished in the morning, while the Bible mentions that Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) traveled in the morning. Bible also mentions that as punishment, the fire was also sent down from the heavens. However, there is no mentions of the fire in the Holy Qur'an. The Bible also states quite a lot of absurdities attributed to the Prophet of Allah, Lot (peace be upon him) as being a drunkard and who performed incest. (8) This account is negated by the Holy Qur'an since "Allah chooses His Messengers from among angels, and from among men. Surely, Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing." (9)

Why is the destruction of Sodom a relevant lesson for the humanity today? It is important to understand that no perfect law is sent without the manifestation of evil. Once the evil ways became the norm for the mankind, it is made clear that Allah does not tolerate these evil ways and any constant profanity will lead to severe punishment by Allah. Allah, of course, warns people through messengers. If people reject his messengers, then punishment is indeed served. The current situation is exactly the case at this time. People are committing the same acts that are forbidden in the Holy Scriptures and which have led to the destruction of many nations before. Examples of the destruction of such is: people of Noah for worshipping false Gods, people of Aad were arrogant and boastful, people of Thamud rejected the warnings of Allah, and people of Madyan were dishonest in carrying out business.



The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, John Martin, 1852

Rabbi Yuval Cherlow said, "Humanity's dominion over the earth must be for the sake of the Divine." (10) Thus any deviation from the purpose will lead to unfruitful events.

The current supreme leader of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (aba) said that:

"In this day and age another foul matter is being promoted which is not only against nature, but a nation was once destroyed because of it. Governments are in the process of legalizing same-sex marriages, that is, plans are being made on a governmental level to spread something foul and immoral. Some prime ministers are saying such laws should be followed across the globe. A [Christian] priest, probably from South Africa, who obviously follows the Bible which states that a nation was destroyed because of homosexuality, has said that if same-sex married couples cannot go to Heaven, then he would prefer to go to Hell. Such is the extent of immorality in the world today, if it continues to spread like this, then these nations will witness their end. It will make their living in this world hellish, and God knows what treatment they will have in the Hereafter. Medical research has proven that AIDS is fast spreading among homosexual individuals. God's punishment comes in varied forms. It is not necessary that the Divine punishment of stones from the sky will be repeated. The HIV takes a person to a dreadful and excruciating end." (11)

Today school systems tell children that it is perfectly fine to be homosexual or that homosexual partners can adopt children. Children are being brainwashed with television cartoons, advertisements, and programmes promoting homosexual relationships. Believers are mocked and further humiliated if they speak against this

practice. People are being forced to accept this. Some religious clergies including so-called Muslim "Imams" are coming out as openly gay and twisting the religious texts to justify their ways. (12) They are also going out of their ways to perform marriages of the same-sex couples and perform their weddings in religious places. Countries are voting to legalize homosexual marriages where more and more pressure is being put by the "elite" few to let governments sanction its legalization, diverting the attention of people from the real issues. Some people are further corrupting religion by opening mosques where females can lead prayers and where both men and women pray together, again twisting the religious texts to justify their actions. Same-sex partners are even going through artificial insemination or surrogacy to have children and further pollute the minds of generations to come. The fashion industry has made use of this by promoting and using transgender models, confusing and questioning the young mind about their sexuality. Creation of this environment is indeed the work of the idle rich people who seek pleasure in the flesh, be it male or female.

The world is orienting towards physical beauty only, that both girls and boys are accentuating certain parts of their body to get attention. Plastic surgery is on the rise. People are going to lengths to beautify themselves outwardly that they have forgotten about inner beauty and peace. This lack of peace is shown by the number of suicides in young people as well as a mental health crisis. The Holy Qur'an states that people

"know only the outer aspect of the life of this world, and of the Hereafter, they are utterly unmindful. Do they not reflect in their own minds?

Allah has not created the heavens and the earth and all that is between the two but in accordance

with the requirements of wisdom and for a fixed term.

But many among men believe not in the meeting with their Lord." (13)

We live in a world where people do not appreciate the simple basics; they enjoy the overly processed foods, stories, and thoughts that are killing us both physically and mentally. The society is getting fed up with the over-feeding of insensitivity, and many have lost hope and have given up in this race created by such minds to divert the attention of the people from spiritual growth to their financial gains.

People are not aware of a reformer that has come to the world because their attention is fixed on the worldly matters. Khalifatul Masih V (may Allah be his Helper) stated that "the faster immorality is spreading, the greater should be an Ahmadi's efforts to connect to God and try and save himself and the world from its destruction. Worldly people are trying to please a certain section of the society for political gains, and promoting something which is against the commandments of God, and wish to spread it in the entire world which will result in destruction. Out of sympathy for them, we should inform them that God is Ever Merciful, He has kept the door of forgiveness open." He further states: "And those who, when they commit a foul deed or wrong themselves, remember Allah and implore forgiveness for their sins, and who can forgive sins except Allah?" (14). He also said: "God forgives if there is no persistence in foul deeds and one has a fear of God. We need to protect ourselves against all immoralities and also try and show the ways to do so to others." (15)



Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (aba)

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“How to Survive Armageddon”

Syed Sajid Ahmad

I have come across an interesting book that I would like to share some aspects of with readers. It is a short book entitled “How to Survive Armageddon” and written by John C. Brunt. (1) Brunt has been a popular pastor in Southern California and now lives in Seattle. He discusses common end of the world theories in his book and then presents his views.

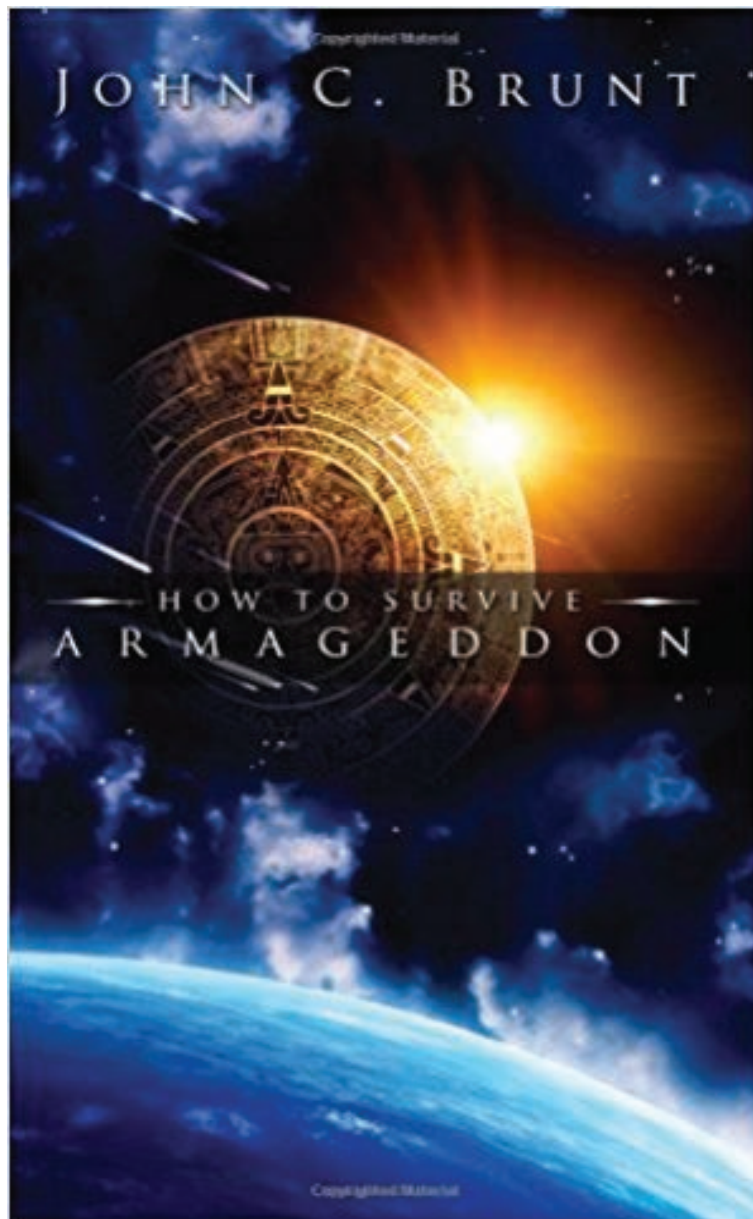
One aspect of this book caught my attention in particular: it is an aspect that has not been discussed commonly, namely, the anticipated time of the second coming of Jesus (as).

In his book, Pastor Brunt writes, “He will guide us if we ask him.” (2) This is the aspect that is not discussed by most writers about the second coming of Jesus (as). The predictions of the expected time of the second coming have been deduced clearly from the interpretation of various scriptures. The dates set for the second coming were not, and are not, determined through a claim of any revelation from God.

The author does not say whether he himself ever asked God and received any response. If he is asking his readers to ask God, then I assume that he too would have made a similar plea, but there is no mention in the book of a plea and any response to it.

What intrigued me the most was that towards the end of the book, the author mentions that one day while teaching a college class on the second coming of Christ, he decided to ask his students if they had ever had dreams about this subject. He writes that he thought it would be a brief diversion before they continued with the rest of the agenda for the day. He was surprised that the students did nothing else that day but discuss the dreams seen by some of them.

The author encountered two surprises. Firstly, that most of his students had experienced dreams about the Second Advent. Secondly, all their dreams were negative and alarming in nature. Reading his account in his own words is interesting:



“Not one had ever dreamed that they were delighted to be redeemed and would spend the rest of eternity with Jesus. Every single dream was about missing out on salvation. I will never forget some of the vivid examples my students shared.

One said he dreamed that he was standing, along with a whole group of people, on a railroad platform waiting for a train. The train pulled in, the conductor got off the train and started calling out the names of the would-be passengers, and one by one people boarded. As this

process continued, the student recognized that the conductor was Jesus. The crowd on the platform got smaller and smaller as more and more got on the train until finally, he was the only one left. The conductor said, "All aboard," and started to enter the train. The student ran up to Him and said that he too should be on the list. The conductor said, "I'm sorry, but your name isn't here." Jesus boarded the train, then called "All aboard" once again, and the train took off with my student standing on the platform all alone. After it left the station, the train began rising into the air until it disappeared. The student remained on the platform, alone and crying. When he woke up, he really was crying.

Another student dreamed that he and his sister, along with their parents, were outside when they noticed a small cloud in the sky. Recognizing that it was the cloud that was bringing Jesus, they were all excited. As the cloud drew closer they could clearly see Jesus, and they shouted, "This is our God, and we have waited for Him." Then the cloud stopped overhead. Very slowly the student's mother, father, and sister began to rise from the ground. But the student stayed there. He tried to jump to grab onto his family members. But nothing worked. Left behind, he had to watch as all his family ascended with Christ.

Other students also recounted their dreams that day, and all were of the same character. Not a single one was happy and positive about the Second Coming." (3)

After relating the dreams, the author tries to justify their somewhat uninspiring connotations. Before the end of the book, he states:

"I have found some good news recently, however. I related the stories of my students' dreams in a sermon in the church where I now pastor and had several people tell me afterward that they had dreamed positive dreams about the Second Coming. Their dreams were not nightmares. They were excited in them and finding themselves saved by His grace, they were caught up to meet Him in the air. That is good news. Maybe the message that the Second Coming is good news is getting out there and making a difference." (4)

While reading this book, I was trying to contact the author. I found his email address and sent him a message saying I had good news for him, namely, that the Second

Coming had happened. When I reached the part where he suggests asking from God, I again sent him a message inviting him to ask God for guidance. When I reached the account of the students' dreams, I wrote him that many people from all over the world see dreams and join the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community every year. It so happened that just after sending this message, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba), the Khalifa of the Messiah (as) of this age, delivered a sermon mentioning incidents where people were guided to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community through dreams. I immediately sent him the summary of that sermon.

After 9/11/2001, I was invited to a school to talk about Islam. There were so many questions from students who wanted to know about so many aspects of Islam that the teacher extended my lecture into the next period and invited me a second time. Each time the discussion covered two periods.

The end of the world also came into discussion. One of the students told the class that before the last day of the year 2000, her grandparents sold everything and retired to their basement on the evening of December 31 waiting for the world to end at midnight.

Dates for the end of the world have been fixed many times. Many people sold or gave away their belongings every time, but ultimately had to continue with their lives. End of the world scenarios have gained great attention from the masses. Authors have offered fictional and non-fictional accounts. Many works have made best-seller lists, and their authors have amassed great wealth and have become famous based on accounts that never came to be true.



In Christian thought, the second coming of Jesus (as) will precede the end of the world. Some writers say that the second coming is ambiguous as Jesus (as) was to come back during the lives of his disciples. This confusion is easily resolved today, as, according to the beliefs of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, we now know that Jesus did not die on the cross; he was taken down before death and he migrated to the East to avoid persecution. It was probably thus that he could have come back to Palestine when the circumstances had improved. However, the Romans continued to rule, the Jews continued to reject Jesus, his followers could not acquire sufficient strength, Jerusalem was destroyed, and Jesus never had amenable circumstances to come back. He died in Kashmir and was buried there. Moreover, his second coming during his lifetime could not take place, and his contemporaries in Palestine left this world without seeing him among themselves again. Yet, he also was to appear in the latter days.

According to the Bible, it is expected that Jesus (as) will be visible to everyone when he descends. (5) We know today that the world is round. A phenomenon appearing on one side of the spherical earth cannot be visible to the people on the opposite hemisphere. Therefore, the prophecy that "all will see him" cannot be fulfilled literally and needs interpretation.

Additionally, if Jesus (as) is going to come back as a human being, he cannot be physically 'larger' than ordinary human beings. An ordinary human being cannot be seen from any great distance unless ways other than the naked eye are employed for observation. Thus, the expectation of Jesus (as) being seen by all people when he descends cannot be taken literally, rendering the manner of his descent open to interpretation.

It is said that, "Jesus will descend with clouds". (6) If he will descend in clouds, then he should be hidden in the clouds and should not be visible. People will not be able to see him until he gets out of the clouds, but in that instance, he will not be in the clouds anymore. This part of the prophecy obviously cannot be fulfilled literally and needs interpretation.

Just as the followers of Jesus (as) have taken the prophecies about his second coming literally, so have a large majority of Muslims. Both groups have the opportunity to realize that the prophecies are interpretable. If we truly comprehend fulfillment of the prophecies today, we can appreciate that they could not have been worded better than they are.

Only a short time before the advent of the Messiah (as) of this age, the world started seeing rapid advancement in technology leading to greater interaction among human beings. Advancements in transportation made travel time shorter.

Advancements in communication technology decreased the time in remote contact. Today, technology has advanced to the point where the message and image of the Messiah (as) of this age can be witnessed live and simultaneously by all people anywhere in the world and this happens through the transmission of video including image and voice over the clouds. The word of God was worthy of its fulfillment through unprecedented and unimaginable advancement in technology. And still today, the door of direct communication with God, on the other hand, has not been closed, and people are also guided through dreams, visions, and revelation as they have always been.



Pastor Brunt declares unequivocally, "... it would be foolish of us to ignore the abundant evidence that we are living in the very final part of the last days and that Jesus is coming soon." (7) After further discussion, he again writes, "I believe Jesus is coming soon." (8)

The prolific use of the word "soon" in the context of the Second Coming of Jesus (as) for over one hundred years indeed renders it quite ambiguous. The entire concept deserves to be revised to state that the time when the Second Coming took place was indeed the very time for its occurrence, and if one claimant had not come forward, another would have. In reality there has been no other claimant since the identity of the true Messiah of this age, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) of Qadian, India, was revealed and was made easy to understand for everyone, for once and for always.

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Importance of Prayer During Times of Calamity

Anser Ahmad

“[He] who created death and life to test you [as to] which of you is best in deed – and He is the Exalted in Might, the Forgiving.”(1)

Why do natural disasters occur?

Over the last one hundred years, we have seen world wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes all over the world. It is interesting to note that while in the past 1,100 years there have been only eleven massive earthquakes (where the death toll of each exceeded 50,000 people), however, in the last 100 years, since 1905, thirteen such earthquakes have occurred. (2) And more recently, between 2004 and 2014, 18 earthquakes with magnitudes of 8.0 or more devastated parts of the world. This an increase of 265 percent over the average rate of the previous century, according to a report to the annual meeting of the Geological Society of America this week in Vancouver, British Columbia. (3)

Furthermore, in the last hundred years, the casualties from wars have spread across 35 countries, where one hundred and five million people have lost their lives. (4) Likewise, we have had an exponential increase in natural disasters such as the Iran earthquake, the Thailand Tsunami, the Pakistan earthquake, Hurricane Katrina, and more recently Hurricane Irma, which devastated Puerto Rico and affected parts of the United States mainland.

There are various scientific explanations as to why natural disasters occur. However, the focus seems to be only on ‘how’ these calamities occur and not ‘why’ they occur. The answer to ‘why’ ultimately remains with Allah alone. One such answer to ‘why’ has been revealed to us by Allah in the Holy Qur’an:

“(Corruption and) Mischief has appeared on land and sea because of what the hands of men have earned, that He (Allah) may give them a taste of some of their deeds in order that they may turn back (from evil).”(5)

The increase in the number of weather-related disasters may be attributed to global warming, as many scientists believe, which in turn has been linked to humanity’s increased dependence on fossil fuels and neglect of the environment. Natural disasters, therefore, may be a ‘wake-up’ call. Allah in His Infinite Mercy is jolting humanity through such incidents, so that it may mend its ways and reflect on its transgressions.

Another cause of such calamities, according to Islamic teachings, is common and open disobedience of Allah’s commandments. Historically when a particular land is infested with disobedience to Allah, earthquakes from beneath and violent storms from above are commonplace. The Holy Qur’an states: “Never did We send a Prophet to any town but We seized the people thereof with adversity and suffering, that they might become humble. Then We changed (their evil condition) into good until they grew (in affluence and number) and said, ‘Suffering and happiness betided our fathers (also).’ (So if it befalls us, it matters not) Then We seized them suddenly, while they perceived not.”(6)



Prayers of the Prophets:

It has always been the case with the prophets of God, that despite the fact that they are bestowed with prophecies of the success of their mission, and they maintain immense faith in the promises given by God, they never stop praying to God for their success. They do so because they believe that God has the power to do whatever He wills.

As far as natural calamities go, Prophets and holy men of God do have the ability to affect changes in nature. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, Messiah of this age (as) states:

“Under Divine command, prayer influences the lower and higher strata of the world and sways the elements, heavenly bodies, and hearts of men towards the desired objective. There is no shortage of such examples in Divine scriptures. In fact, some kinds of miracles are also the result of the accep-

tance of prayer. Prayer is the source of the thousands of miracles shown by Prophets as well as the marvels that have been displayed by the saints to this day.”(7)

The Holy Qur’an is replete with accounts of the Prophets and how natural disasters were sent to their peoples:

Hazrat Noah (as):

The Holy Qur’an relates about Hazrat Noah (as) him) and the flood: “The people of Noah rejected the truth before them; aye, they rejected Our servant and said, ‘A madman and one who is spurned.’ He, therefore, prayed to his Lord saying, ‘I am overcome, so come Thou to my help!’ Thereupon We opened the gates of heaven, with water pouring down; And We caused the earth to burst forth with springs, so the two waters met for a purpose that was decreed.”(8)

Hazrat Ayyub (as)

Hazrat Ayyub (Job) (as) fell sick and underwent difficult times due to his affliction. He eventually complained to Allah and asked for Allah’s Mercy. However, he did not ask for the pain to be lifted, because he viewed his physical pain as a mercy and blessing in itself: “I have been afflicted with great distress: but You are the most merciful of the merciful.”(9)

Allah’s Mercy, with regards to the situation of Hazrat Ayyub (as), was represented in lifting his pains, plus granting him a family who were doubled in number: “We heard his prayer and relieved his suffering, We restored to him his family, doubling their number as an act of Our Grace, and as a reminder for the worshippers.”(10)

Tribe of Hazrat Ad (as)

The Holy Qur’an states, “The tribe of ‘Ad also rejected the Truth. How terrible then was My chastisement and My warning! We sent against them a furious wind, for a long period of time of un-ending ill-luck, which tore people away as though they were trunks of uprooted and hollow palm trees.”(11)

People of Hazrat Lut (as)

“Then the promised chastisement seized them (the people of Hazrat Lot) at sunrise. We turned the city upside down, and We rained upon them stones of clay.”(12)

Hazrat Isa (Jesus) (as)

Hazrat Isa (as) did not suggest a solution to Allah with regards to what to do with those who associated him with Allah. Instead, he left it up to Allah and asked for the result which would signify Allah’s power. He said: “If Thou punish them, they are Thy servants; and if Thou forgive them, Thou surely art the Mighty, the Wise.”(13)

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa):

In the early years of Islam, when the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) was forced to defend the faith, the Muslims comprising of no more than 313 men and boys were faced with an army of one thousand Meccans in the Battle of Badr. Even with such disproportionate odds, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (as) was promised victory by God, which he conveyed to his best friend, Hazrat Abu Bakr (ra).

Although the victory was promised to him, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) continued to pray. According to the Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as): “History tells us that when the battle of Badr was raging, and the Holy Prophet (sa) was busy praying to God (for victory), Hazrat Abu Bakr (ra) requested him to stop praying for he had already been promised victory by God. However, the Holy Prophet (sa) continued praying. Some people have opined that it could be said that the faith of Hazrat Abu Bakr (ra) was stronger than that of the Holy Prophet (sa); but in fact, the Ma’rifat (God realization) of the Holy Prophet (sa) was much greater, in that the more a man realizes what the situation is, the more he fears God. The Ma’rifat (God realization), of the Holy Prophet (sa) made him fear that God has the power to do whatever He likes. One should, therefore, in no case, abandon praying to God.”(14)



The Effect of Prayer [Dua]

During times of natural disasters, the best and the most valuable support and help, along with physical and medical assistance, is to make sincere prayer (or "Dua") for the well being of the victims. Dua is a compelling and potent means, which is available to every one of us, whether we have practical resources or not. One should pray that Allah gives the victims strength, patience, and comfort and that He protects and guides them through the critical period and provides rapid recovery from their physical, mental and spiritual wounds.

Only Allah can provide what has been asked for in the above prayers. No amount of worldly means will provide for the loss that has been suffered by the victims.

In Islamic terminology, Du'a is an Arabic word which means, 'invocation,' which is an act of supplication. Thus, Muslims regard du'a as a profound act of worship, based on the teachings of Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa), and based on natural human instinct.

According to the Hazrat Mirza Gulam Ahmad, Messiah of this age (as), "Prayer, in essence, means a relationship of mutual attraction between a righteous person and his Lord. This means that God's grace first draws a person towards Himself, and then, through the magnetism of the person's sincerity, God draws closer to him. In the state of prayer, this relationship reaches a point where it manifests wonderful qualities. When a man in grave difficulty falls in prayer with perfect certainty, perfect hope, perfect fidelity, and perfect resolve; and when he becomes perfectly alert and advances far into the field of self-annihilation, tearing aside all veils of heedlessness, lo and behold, he finds before him the Divine threshold." (15)

Muslims from all over the world connect with Allah and ask Him for forgiveness and His favor. In the Holy Qur'an, Allah promises: "Call on Me; I will answer your Prayer. Indeed, those who disdain My worship will enter Hell [rendered] contemptible." (16)

Does this mean that every prayer of each person will be

answered in its literal sense? Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian (as) explains this verse as follows:

"The promise of the acceptance of prayer is a general promise to which there are no exceptions. Moreover, as some verses of the Holy Qur'an indicate that some things, which have been decreed not to be granted, are never granted. At the same time, it is evident from some other verses that no prayer is rejected and all are accepted. There can be no other way of reconciling this contradiction and inconsistency between the verses, other than to interpret the acceptance of prayer as the acceptance of worship, i.e., to consider prayer as a kind of worship which God Almighty has promised to accept when it is offered earnestly and with humility and submission..."

Nevertheless, a great benefit of prayer is that when one prays, one's heart is overawed by the Majesty and Omnipotence of God, and this feeling overcomes all the apprehensions which had been the source of distress, and the supplicant begins to experience forbearance and fortitude. This is a natural consequence of worship and this is what the acceptance of prayer means." (17)

Conclusion: "Allah burden not any soul beyond its capacity"

We should know that this life is nothing but a test for us. Hardship, therefore, is only another test. In academics, when a student takes a test, he can not expect to go to an exam and find just easy questions. The same applies to this life. God tests us with blessings and also tests us with hardships. However, the Qur'an teaches us, "Allah burdens not any soul beyond its capacity. It shall have the reward it earns, and it shall get the punishment it incurs." (18)

If we always remember, that it is God Who has created us, and He knows us better than ourselves. God will not test us with something that we cannot handle or do not have the readiness to learn how to manage. That is why in the Holy Qur'an, we are taught to pray, "Our Lord, do not punish us if we forget or fall into error; and our Lord, lay not on us a responsibility as Thou didst lay upon those before us. Our Lord, burden us not with what we have not the strength to bear; and efface our sins, and grant us forgiveness and have mercy on us." (19)

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Ten Plagues of Egypt through Moses(as)

Arifa Haleem

The Biblical narration of Ten Plagues through Moses (as) revolves around polytheist Pharaoh, Moses (as), (Moshe) the prophet of God, his brother Aaron (as) and the Israelites. The plagues were brought on Egyptians as a Divine punishment. Pharaoh the arrogant and tyrannical ruler of Egypt persecuted and enslaved the Israelites. Once Pharaoh saw an unusual dream and asked for its interpretation. Haman, a counselor of his court interpreted it and said, an Israeli boy would be born and destroy his kingdom but its solution was to kill all the first born Israeli boys. Pharaoh feared losing his kingdom so he ordered all Israeli boys to be killed. Moses (as)'s mother was in fear for her son's life. She put the baby in a special box, prayed for his safety and cast it into the River Nile. Destiny took him to the Pharaoh's palace and he was brought up under the loving care of Pharaoh's wife. When he grew up into a young man he came to know about his origin. Once during a dispute, Moses (as) struck a Coptic in order to protect a Jew but his blow proved fatal and the man died. Fearing the death penalty Moses (as) fled from Egypt to Midian. There he got married but after a few years he decided to travel back to Egypt. On the way to Egypt he along with his family stopped and there he observed fire in a bush. He decided to go there and bring some fire. It is stated in Qur'an that when he reached there he was called by a voice, 'O Moses,

"Verily I am thy Lord! So take off thy shoes; for thou art in the sacred Valley of Tuwa.

"And I have chosen thee, so harken to what is revealed."

"Verily, I am Allah; there is no God beside Me. So serve Me, and observe Prayer for My remembrance." (1)

Then about his rod God said, "Cast it down, O Moses" So he cast it down, and behold! It was a serpent running. God said, "Catch hold of it, and fear not We shall restore it to its former condition.

"And draw thy hand close under thy arm pit. It shall come forth white, without any Disease" (2)

After granting these Signs God directed Moses (as) to go to Pharaoh because he had transgressed all the limits. In order to make this difficult task easy Moses (as) prayed to God for granting him a helper, his brother Aaron (as). Qur'an says that God granted his prayer and said, "So go ye both to him and say, we are the Messengers of thy Lord; so let the



Children of Israel go with us; and afflict them not. We have indeed brought thee a Sign from thy Lord; and peace shall be on him who follows the guidance." (3)

Moses (as) and Aaron (as) arrived in the court of Pharaoh and very gently conveyed him the message of God. They tried to convince him about the Absolute Creator but he insisted to show the Signs of His Truthfulness. Moses (as) threw down his rod that became a serpent.

Pharaoh called his magicians who also threw down their sticks which turned into snakes but the serpent devoured them. He showed the other Sign too but Pharaoh rejected the Signs and refused to believe in God but his magicians believed and fell down in prostration.

Moses (as) and Aaron (as) repeatedly warned Pharaoh and his people about God's anger and severe punishment but stubborn and stone hearted emperor did not listen.

The Holy Qur'an says, "They said to Moses 'Whatever Sign you mayest bring us to bewitch us with, we will not believe in thee.'" (4)

In this regard Exodus the second book of Torah says, Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord that I should obey him and let Israel go. I do not know the Lord and I will not let Israel go. (5)

Pharaoh challenged God and persisted in his refusal to free the Israelites so God inflicted punishment on Pharaoh and his People with a series of plagues. These Interlinked plagues and their supernatural intensity was beyond the understanding of Egyptians but after every calamity Pharaoh asked Moses (as) to pray to his Lord for its removal but after its removal his heart was more hardened.



Biblical Narration of Ten Plagues

1. Water of Nile changed in to blood
2. Frogs covered all the land and no place was spared
3. Dust turned into gnats and lice were every where Swarm of flies covered the land
4. Death of all the Egyptian livestock happened
5. Epidemics of Boils broke out on the Egyptians
6. Hailstorm killed humans as well as animals and destroyed vegetation
7. Locusts covered all the land and consumed all vegetation
8. Darkness covered Egypt for three days
9. The firstborn sons of Egyptians including Pharaoh's first born died.

The Holy Bible narrates about ten Plagues but The Holy Qur'an mentions about nine plagues out of which five differ from the Holy Bible.

Qur'anic Narration of Nine Biblical Plagues

1. And We inspired Moses, "Throw thy rod and lo! it swallowed up what they fiend." (6)
2. And put thy hand into thy bosom, it will come forth white without any disease." (7)
3. And we punished Pharaoh's people with



draught and scarcity of fruit that they might be admonished." (8)

- 4.- 8. "Then We sent upon them the storm, Locusts and the lice, and the frogs and the blood--clear Signs but they behaved proudly and were a sinful people." (9)
9. Then We revealed to Moses, "Strike the sea with thy rod, "Thereupon it parted and every part looked like a huge mountain." (10)

Bible relates that before the final plague God took the matter in His own hand and decided to destroy the Egyptian kingdom. So Lord instructed Moses (as) that each Israelite family should sacrifice a lamb at night, roast it and enjoy the dinner but no leftover should remain there in the morning. They should also put some blood of the sacrificed lamb on their doors and door frames.

Exodus further relates, And Moses (as) said, "Thus saith, the Lord, About mid-night I will go out into the midst of Egypt. And all first born of the land shall die, from the first born of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the first born of maidservant that is behind the mill, and all the first born of beast." (11)

So on that night Lord passed over Egypt and by sparing the houses of Israelites He smote every firstborn son in Egypt. In the morning the voices of wailing were

coming out from every house. Even Pharaoh's own first born son had died. Passover night caused such a panic that Pharaoh allowed Israelites to take all of their possessions and leave the country.

Bible and Qur'an both agree that Moses (as) led his people towards the Red Sea so that he could take them out of Egypt but Pharaoh once again changed his mind and chased Moses (as). Moses (as) prayed to God for help. In reply God Almighty directed him to strike his rod into water. He did so and the water parted in the form of two huge mountains. After watching Moses (as) crossing the sea through this open passage, Pharaoh and his people also entered into the sea. When Moses (as) and his men came out of water on the dry land the passage closed and water engulfed Pharaoh and his people. They drowned and met a terrible end. At the time of drowning he submitted to God. God saved his body (not mentioned in Bible) as a sign of punishment for the entire world. After crossing the sea a long story of Moses (as), Aaron (as) and the Israelites continued and took a different turn.

Dr. Maurice Bucaille a French medical doctor who conducted forensic examination of royal Mummies, he in his book "The Bible, the Qur'an and science" identifies Merneptah the Pharaoh of Exodus, Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad in his book "Revelation, Rationality, Knowledge and Truth" also indicates Merneptah, the Exodus Pharaoh. Whether the drowned Pharaoh was Ramesses 11, Merneptah or anyone else, his name is still controversial but Quranic prophecy has been fulfilled and his

mummified body is still lying in some Egyptian Museum.

On the positive side these disasters served the purpose of establishing God's Omnipotence and discrediting polytheism. God's Justice, love and compassion for the persecuted and oppressed prevailed and the persecuted Israelites got their freedom without being harmed. Authority of Moses (as) and Aaron (as) was confirmed, and magicians lost their importance.

In both Holy Bible and Holy Qur'an the calamities inflicted on Egyptians are almost the same except their number, order and detail. Though Modern knowledge has found many inconsistencies in the interpretation of these events yet these calamities were not ordinary ones. They were a clear manifestation that some Great and Miraculous Force was working behind them. History tells that many nations like Ad (as), Thamud (as), Noah (as), Saleh (as) had also been the examples who were punished and destroyed by God for their evil deeds. In this regard the Prophecy and warning of Promised Messiah (as) about Bubonic Plague in India is also unforgettable. Merciful God goes on warning the wicked and evil people through His messengers who warn them and convey the message of Goodness but when after repeated warnings they do not listen and challenge God then He directly deals with them. For keeping Goodness alive He hits the evil and punishes them in His own miraculous way so that humanity could pass through the process of transformation and reformation.

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The Holy Qur'an on Natural Disasters

Shazia Sohail

The purpose of the creation of humankind, according to the Holy Qur'an, is the establishment of a spiritual relationship with God Almighty, which is only possible through righteous conduct.(1)

To this end, He sent Prophets who taught their people, first and the foremost, about the benevolence and mercy of God and admonished them to be grateful and to act peacefully.(2) Invariably, the response of the majority of people throughout history has been to ridicule their Prophets and act with extreme arrogance toward them and their humble followers.(3) Prophets of God always sought to establish social justice by bringing people closer to God. They came as bearers of glad-tidings for the righteous and for the oppressed, and as 'warners' for the wicked and the unjust.(4) Their faith in God and advocacy on behalf of the poor is always met with hatred and persecution. When rebellion and inequity increase, Prophets of God warn the people that God will punish them and replace them with right-minded people.

The first step proposed by the Qur'an towards recognition of God and toward spiritual development is humility.(5)

The Qur'an is replete with stories of Prophets and their people whom He afflicted with 'poverty and adversity that they might humble themselves.'(6)

Time and again Prophets related the stories of their ancestors who were destroyed for their inequities, and tried, through various signs and logical arguments, to convince their people to mend their ways. 'Does it not afford guidance to them how many generations We destroyed before them, in whose dwellings they now walk? Therein verily are Signs for those who are endowed with reason.'(7)

The remnants of destroyed civilizations have been held out as signs for people to reflect upon the transitory nature of power, pomp, and glory: 'See they not how many a generation We have destroyed before them? We had established them in the earth as We have established you not, and We sent the clouds over them, pouring down abundant rain; and We caused streams to flow beneath them; then did We destroy them because of their sins and raised up after them another generation.'(8)

Prophets remind their people that in times of danger, human nature itself testifies to the existence of God, even if temporarily: 'And when they go on board a ship, they call on Allah, with sincere and exclusive faith in Him. But when He brings them safe to land, behold, they associate partners with Him.'(9)



The story Of Noah's Ark

All the while Prophets are commanded not to force their people to believe: 'And if thy Lord had enforced His will, surely, all who are on the earth would have believed together. Wilt thou, then, force men to become believers?'(10)

While God declares Himself to be the Guardian of people's faith, since He has endowed them with reason, He also deals fiercely with those who refuse to employ their reason despite constant reminders from the Prophet in their midst: 'And no soul can believe except by the permission of Allah. And He makes His wrath descend on those who will not use their reason.'(11)

If they refuse to turn to Him they are at the mercy of forces of nature, and God's mercy does not intervene on their behalf: 'Say to the disbelievers: "But for your prayer to Him my Lord would not care for you. You have indeed rejected the truth, and the punishment of your rejection will now cleave to you)."'

Only in the event of their complete refusal to pay heed to the Prophet's words, and when all hope for their reformation is lost does God Almighty decide to destroy their way

of life, out of mercy for the future of mankind: 'And We destroyed the generations before you when they did wrong; and there came to them their Messengers with clear Signs, but they would not believe.'(12)

'And thy Lord is Self-Sufficient, full of mercy. If He please, He can do away with you and cause to succeed you what He pleases, even as He raised you from the offspring of other people.'(13)

The Holy Qur'an claims that Prophets were sent to, and rejected by, every nation: 'The people of Noah and other groups after them denied Our Signs before these people, and every nation strove to seize their Messenger and disputed by means of false arguments that they might rebut the truth thereby. Then I seized them, and how terrible was My retribution!'(14)

No nation was ever punished by God without first having received a Divine message: 'And never did We destroy any township but it had Warners.'(15)

In every case the Prophets and their followers are saved: 'Then shall We save Our Messengers and those who believe. Thus does it always happen; it is incumbent on Us to save believers.'(16)

Hence, all calamities mentioned in the Qur'an have specific distinguishing features that render them identifiable as Divine punishment. That is not to say that every natural disaster emanates from divine visitation, but some certainly do: these hold the distinction of a Prophet having foretold them to a people who are steeped in certain vices, are selective in their destruction and they result in the triumph of a new philosophy that was far less accepted prior to the disaster. These punishments were progressive in nature and were preceded by lesser disasters. In every instance, the punishment was conditional upon people's attitude, and behavior and the Divine promise was communicated by the Prophet that God would avert it if they would exhibit remorse over previous conduct. (17)

Our attention would not be drawn repeatedly to the signs of destruction of earlier civilizations if these stories were not meant to be prophetic for present times as well: 'Surely, there have been many dispensations before you; so, travel through the earth and see how evil was the end of those who treated the Prophets as liars. This (the Qur'an) is a clear demonstration to men, and guidance and an admonition to the God-fearing.'(18)



Destruction from the 2011 earthquake in Japan.

Let us examine in detail how the Holy Qur'an sets forth accounts of Divine punishment that came as natural disasters during the time of various Prophets:

Prophet Noah (as) lived about 5,000 years ago.(19) He called his people to worship one God but his people responded with 'Surely, we see thee to be in manifest error (7:61): Prophet Noah (as) spent years trying to convince them to give up their wrongdoing and turn to God, with little success. God then revealed to him: 'None of thy people will believe except those who have already believed; grieve not therefore at what they have been doing. And build thou the Ark under Our eyes and as commanded by Our revelation. And address not Me concerning the wrongdoers. They are surely going to be drowned.'(20)

The picture of the flood emerges thus: 'Till, when Our command came, and the fountains of the earth gushed forth, We said, 'Embark therein two of every kind, male and female, and thy family, except those against whom the word has already gone forth, and those who believe.' And there did not believe and live with him except a few.'(21)

There was a poignant moment when, as the Ark moved along, 'Noah cried unto his son, while he was keeping apart, "O my son, embark with us and be not with the disbelievers." He replied, "I shall soon betake myself to a mountain which will shelter me from the water." He said, "There is no shelter for anyone this day, from the decree of Allah, excepting those to whom He shows mercy." And the wave came in between the two; so he was among the drowned. And it was said, "O earth, swallow thy water, and O sky, cease raining." And the water was made to subside and the matter was ended. And the Ark came to rest on

al-Judi' (22)

Prophet Hud (as) was sent to the people of 'Ad who lived on the Arabian Peninsula. (23) They were a prosperous and arrogant people who said, 'Who is mightier than we in power (41:16)?' Their Prophet warned them, to no avail: 'Do you build monuments on every eminence out of vanity, and erect palaces as though you will live forever; When you lay hands upon anyone you do so as tyrants. So fear Allah, and obey me. Fear Him Who has helped you with that which you know. He has helped you with cattle, and sons, and gardens, and springs. I fear for you the torment of an awful day.' (24)



Prophet Hud's Grave Site

After repeated warnings, the 'Ad were destroyed by a severe sandstorm. 'And as for 'Ad, they were destroyed by a fierce roaring wind, Which He caused to blow against them for seven nights and eight days consecutively so that thou might have seen the people therein lying prostrate, as though they were trunks of palm-trees fallen down. Dost thou see any remnant of them?' (25)

The name and distinctive features of the city built by the 'Ad have been mentioned in the Qur'an: 'Hast thou not seen how thy Lord dealt with 'Ad — The tribe of Iram, possessors of lofty buildings, the like of whom have not been created in these parts?' (26)

The Qur'an also indicates that the ruins of Iram still exist for us to see and learn a lesson from: 'So travel through the earth and see what was the end of those who rejected the messengers.' (27)

However, the city itself was not discovered until 1992! In 1973, the city of Eblus was discovered in Syria, along with a large collection of clay tablets that were more than four thousand years old. Iram was mentioned in them as a city

that the people of Eblus did business with. So, more than 1,300 years after the revelation of the Qur'an, evidence had been discovered that an ancient city by the name of Iram had existed. Then, in 1992, guided by clues found in the Holy Qur'an, the archaeologist Nicholas Clapp finally discovered it in the southern region of Oman. (28)

Prophet Salih (as) was sent to Thamud, or the Nabataeans, who were descendants of 'Ad. (29) They had a very grand and prosperous civilization from about the 4th Century BC until the 7th Century AD. (30) Mada'in Salih and Petra are cities where the ruins of palaces carved into mountains and the grandeur of their civilization can still be seen. They asked the Prophet for a sign and were told:

'Verily there has come to you a clear evidence from your Lord — this she-camel of Allah, a Sign for you. So leave her that she may feed in Allah's earth, and do her no harm, lest a painful punishment seize you. And remember the time when He made you inheritors of His favors after 'Ad, and assigned you an abode in the land; you build palaces in its plains, and you hew the mountains into houses. Remember, therefore, the favors of Allah and commit not iniquity in the earth, causing disorder.' (31)

They were a rebellious people who hamstrung the she-camel, challenging Salih to do his worst to them. The Divine punishment came thus:

'So the earthquake seized them and in their homes they lay prostrate upon the ground. (32) The calamity of a humiliating punishment seized them. (33) We sent against them a single blast, and they became like the dry stubble, trampled upon. (34) Then, as for Thamud, they were destroyed with a violent blast. (35) So their Lord destroyed them completely because of their sin.' (36)

There is undoubtedly an important lesson about the heinous nature of animal cruelty in this account.

Prophet Lot (as) lived about 4,000 years ago. (37) His people practiced homosexuality which, according to the Qur'an, was an unprecedented deviance. They also committed highway robberies and behaved shamelessly in public:

'And We sent Lot; he said to his people, "You commit an abomination which none among mankind has ever committed before you. Do you indeed come lustfully to men and cut off the highway for travelers? And you commit abomination in your meetings!" But the only answer of his

people was that they said, "Bring upon us the punishment of Allah if you speak the truth." (38)

And: (Lot said) "Do you, of all peoples, approach males, and leave your wives whom your Lord has created for you? Nay, you are a people who transgress." (39)

His people responded with: '... Drive out the followers of Lot from your township. They are indeed a people who pretend to be pure.' (40)

Upon realizing that there were hardly any decent men left in the towns under his ministry, Prophet Lot (as) relayed God's warning to them: 'We are surely going to bring down on the people of this town a punishment from heaven, for they have been rebellious.' (41)

The natural disaster of an earthquake, coupled with the eruption of gaseous fissures, followed in the wake of this dire warning: 'So when Our command came, We turned that town upside down and We rained upon it stones of clay, layer upon layer, marked for them in the decree of thy Lord. And such punishment is not far from the wrongdoers of the present age.' (42)

A crucial reminder may be gleaned from the fate of the wives of Prophets Noah (as) and Lot (as), namely, that every individual is judged according to his or her actions:

'Allah sets forth for those who disbelieve, the example, of the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot. They were under two righteous servants of Ours, but they acted unfaithfully toward them. So they availed them naught against Allah, and it was said to them, 'Enter the Fire, ye twain, along with those who enter it.' (43)

Prophet Moses (as) was an Israelite Prophet who lived about 3,500 years ago (44) and sought to liberate the Israelites from slavery to the Pharaoh, to whom he repeatedly warned: 'I have come to you with a clear Sign from your Lord; therefore, let the children of Israel go with me.' (45)

As stated previously, one of the distinguishing features of Divine punishment is that it is preceded by a series of lesser disasters:

'And We showed them no Sign, but it was greater than its preceding sister, and We seized them with punishment, that they might turn to Us.' (46)

Moses (as):

'And We punished Pharaoh's people with drought and scarcity of fruits, that they might be admonished.' (47)
'Then We sent upon them the storm and the locusts, and the lice, and the frogs, and the blood — clear Signs; but they behaved proudly and were a sinful people'

After every calamity Pharaoh's people said:

'O Moses, pray for us to thy Lord according to that which He has promised to thee. If thou remove from us the punishment, we will surely believe in thee and we will surely send with thee the children of Israel.' (48)

But they broke their word every time. Then the final punishment came:

'So We took vengeance upon them and drowned them in the sea because they treated Our Signs as lies and were heedless of them.' (49)

The Holy Qur'an relates that just before drowning Pharaoh affirmed his belief in the God of Israelites. God replied:

'What! Now! While thou wast disobedient before this and wast of the mischief-makers? So this day We will save thee in thy body alone that thou mayest be a sign to those who came after thee.' (50)

The mummified body of the Pharaoh, Rameses II, was discovered almost 3400 years later!

Prophet Shu'aib (as) was a non-Israelite Prophet and is believed to be the father-in-law of Moses. (51) His people were the descendants of Midian who was the son of Prophet Abraham (as) by his bond-maid, Keturah. His people suffered from the vice of measuring and weighing dishonestly in business. He said:

'O my people, worship Allah. You have no God other than Him. And give not short measure and short weight. I see you in a state of prosperity, and I fear for you the punishment of a destructive day.' (52)

His people behaved arrogantly and rejected him:

'So the earthquake seized them, and in their homes, they lay prostrate upon the ground. Those who accused Shu'aib of lying became as if they had never dwelt therein. Those who accused Shu'aib of lying — it was they who

were the losers.’(53)

Prophet Jonah (as) was an Israelite prophet who lived in the 8th Century BC.(54) He has the distinction of being the only Prophet, until Prophet Muhammad (sa), whose people heeded his warnings and repented:

‘Why was there no other people, save the people of Jonah, who should have believed so that their belief would have profited them? When they believed, We removed from them the punishment of disgrace in the present life, and We gave them provision for a while.’(55)

Prophet Muhammad (sa) is a global Prophet who claimed that his ministry will last till the end of time. Hence it stands to reason that all the stories mentioned in the Qur’an are warnings, primarily, for all Muslims and, secondarily, for the entire world. Every nation now knows right from wrong and, according to the Qur’an,(56) can avoid creating disorder by strictly following the teachings of their religion. Yet we see inequity and conflict everywhere. If Divine punishment were to come, it would have to be global in nature and of unprecedented ferocity to have a lasting effect. One such situation has been mentioned in the Qur’an:

‘Woe to every backbiter, slanderer. Who amasses wealth and counts it time after time. He thinks that his wealth will make him immortal. Nay, he shall surely be cast into ‘Al-Hutamah,’ And what should make you know what the ‘Hutamah’ is? It is Allah’s kindled fire. Which will leap at hearts. It will be enclosed against them. In extended columns.’(57)

These verses can only now be fully understood since the atomic era is upon us. Just before the moment of eruption, the atom, or ‘Hutamah,’ which means the tiniest of particles, extend into columns due to internal energy, and before the fire burns the body, extremely powerful radiation strikes the heart and causes it to stop.(58)

The vices mentioned in this verse as the source of conflict are (i) backbiting and slandering, a favorite pastime of 24-hour news media the world over, and use of social media to spread false information, thereby causing harm to innocent people. The same nations are (ii) arrogant due to having amassed immense wealth.

The Qur’an also speaks of the mushroom cloud:

‘Woe on that day unto those who reject the truth!’ Now move on towards that which you treated as a lie, ‘Aye, move on towards a shadow which has three sections, ‘Neither affording shade, nor protecting from the flame.’ It throws up sparks like huge castles, as if they were camels of dim color. Woe on that day unto those who reject the truth!’(59)

The warning also seems to encompass those Muslims who neglect prayer:

‘Woe on that day unto those who reject the truth! And when it is said unto them, ‘Bow down,’ they do not bow down. Woe on that day unto those who reject the truth! In which word then, after this, will they believe?’(60)

Since the advent of Islam, virtually every previous religion has gone through a process of reformation; freedom of religion, importance of education and an understanding of equality and basic human rights are concepts that were demonstrated to the world in their perfection and glory during the Islamic Golden Age and are now almost universally accepted as superior values, though their practice may be flawed. Therefore, mankind has no excuse for military conflagrations, widespread poverty, and displacement of populations.

It is incumbent upon us to learn from the examples of earlier peoples to avoid being identified solely with those to whom is said: ‘Woe on that day unto those who reject the truth!’(61)

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It's the End of the World – Should We Care?

Tariq Sharif

The concept of the “End of the World” is firmly embedded in our collective psyche. How many times have we heard someone say: “Don’t worry – it’s not the end of the world”? In some ways, the concept of the end of the world is like death. Religion and science agree that the world as we know it will not last forever, but - just as with death - our attitude most often is “I’ll think about that another day, another week, another year.”

There is one time, though, when almost everyone thinks long and hard about death. That time is when one is faced with the undeniable signs that death is approaching, and one begins to self-assess and ask in what state they are leaving this world. In the same way, all major religions agree that distinct signs are beginning to appear and increase in intensity as our world nears its latter phases of existence. As these signs appear, the question is: should we care? And if so, what should we do about it?

To answer these questions, let us first understand what we mean by the “end of the world”. On one hand there is the end of sustainable life on Earth. A 2015 BBC article states that “Life on Earth will surely be wiped out eventually” going on to say that “Researchers can hypothesise almost no end of threats to life on Earth.” The article goes on to explain that the likelihood and timeframe of every known scenario of Earth’s impending doom is extremely difficult to predict. Like death, it’s a mathematical certainty it will occur but no one knows exactly when and how (1).

On the other hand, the world’s great religions also talk of a Final Day in which the dead will be resurrected and all of mankind will have to come before God. While there are variances in the detailed descriptions of how this will occur, all faiths agree that there will be certain signs of the Latter Days leading up to the Judgement Day:

1. Sin will increase in the world at an accelerated pace
2. There will be increasingly wide-scale destructive events
3. A reformer or messiah will come to give people hope and a means to be saved through reformation

Ultimately, they all teach that mankind will be accountable to God and every man and woman will be judged according to his or her actions. Let us look closer at each of the above signs.

Sin will increase

In Matthew 24:12 we read this prophecy “Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold.”

Similarly Jewish traditions tell us that young people will not respect the old, and governments will become godless. This is why the Midrash says, “One third of the world’s woes will come in the generation preceding the Messiah” (2).

The Holy Qur’an and the sayings of the Holy Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (sa) also provide a plethora of signs of the Latter Days, and make it clear that Muslims would not be exempt from sinfulness and decay. For example, the Holy Prophet (sa) prophesied that:

- Latter Day Muslims would ignore religion in favor of materialistic pursuits
- The practice and institution of Prayer five times daily would begin to disappear
- People would offer their Prayers with excessive speed
- The Holy Qur’an would be wrapped in special materials, but left on the shelf and not read and reflected upon

In terms of the general state of mankind, according to Ibn Abi Shaiba, one of the signs of the eve of Doomsday is a visible increase in sexual immorality. Similarly, according to Anas Ibn Malik, as reported in Muslim (a book of the sayings of the Prophet), one of the signs of the latter days is an increase in adultery. Ibn Mard’waih has reported from Abu Huraira (ra) that one of the prophecies of the Holy Prophet (sa) about the Latter Days relates to the increase in illegitimate births (3).

There will be increasing destructive events

Luke 21:10-11 of the New Testament speaks of impending war as well as natural disasters: “Then He told them, ‘Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes, famines, and pestilences in various places, along with fearful sights and great signs from heaven.’

According to the Talmud, as the Messianic era approaches, the world will experience greater and greater turmoil: vast economic fluctuations, social rebellion, and widespread despair. The culmination will be a world war of immense proportion led by King Gog from the land of Magog. This will be a war the likes of which have not been seen before (4).

Muslims too believe in a time during the Latter Days that will witness the appearance of Gog and Magog. The Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) stated more than 100 years ago "Since Ajj - from which the words Gog and Magog are derived - means fire, God Almighty has disclosed to me that Gog and Magog are peoples who are greater users of fire than any people before them. Their very names indicate that their ships, trains and machines will be run by fire. They will fight their battles with fire" (5).

At another time, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) prophesied, "Remember, God has informed me of many earthquakes. Rest assured, therefore, that as earthquakes have shaken America and Europe, so will they shake Asia. Some of them will resemble the Day of Doom. So many people shall die that rivulets of blood shall flow. Even the birds and the beasts will not be immune against this death. Havoc shall sweep the surface of the earth which shall be the greatest since the birth of man. Habitations shall be demolished as if no one had ever lived in them. This will be accompanied by many other terrible calamities which the earth and the heavens will send forth, till their extraordinary nature will become evident to every reasonable man (6)."

A reformer or messiah will appear in these latter times. Virtually every major religion has the concept that a messiah or reformer will appear in the Latter Days. Some religions believe this person will return their religion to glory through forcible means, while others believe he will be a spiritual reformer through which many people will return back to God. Surprisingly, even within religions, there are differing views and a shortage of details on what this will look like. Muslims and Christians for example believe in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, but not all agree on how this will occur.

For example, the many denominations of Protestantism have differing views on the exact details of Christ's second coming. A short reference to the second coming is contained in the Nicene Creed: "He [Jesus] shall come again in glory to judge the living and the dead; and His kingdom shall have no end" (7). Some Protestant churches proclaim the Mystery of Faith to be: "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again" (8).

It is the traditional view of Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians, preserved from the early Church, that the second coming will be a sudden and unmistakable incident, like "a flash of lightning". They hold the general view that Jesus will not spend any time on the earth in ministry or preaching (9).

Seventh Day Adventists believe that the second coming of Christ will be literal, personal, visible, and worldwide. When he returns, the righteous dead will be resurrected, and together with the righteous living will be glorified and taken to heaven, but the unrighteous will die (10).

The general body of Muslims believe that Jesus' descent will be in the midst of wars fought by a "Bloody Mahdi" against the Masih ad-Dajjal (literally "false messiah", synonymous with the Antichrist) and his followers. Eventually, Jesus will slay the Antichrist Dajjal, and then everyone from the People of the Book (ahl al-kitāb, referring to Jews and Christians) will believe in him (11).

The dilemma for many religious groups is that they see many of the signs from their religion indicative that we are living in the later times or Latter Days, but their expected messiah has not returned. Only one faith group claims the messiah has come and that is the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. They claim that Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908) is the Promised Messiah and has come, like did Jesus, not as an earthly or worldly king, but as a spiritual reformer. The Promised Messiah's message is that only through return to God, repentance, and personal reform can people find peace and avert the hellish disasters and wars predicted by all the major religions. He further taught that violence can never be used for the spread of his message, only rational discourse.



Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian
(1835-1908), The Promised Messiah (as)

He gave an example of the people of Prophet Jonah (as), mentioned in both the Qur'an and Bible. Because the people humbled themselves and sought forgiveness from God, He averted the punishment from them and they were saved (12).

One can certainly claim that religion is man-made, but when we see all of the faiths from every corner of the world predicting similar signs of the Latter Days, and see them becoming fulfilled before our eyes, one starts to wonder about the coming of a messiah that was also predicted. Perhaps the life and message of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) - who claimed to be the Promised Messiah foretold by every major faith - will continue to receive greater awareness and inspection.

Ultimate accountability

As we contemplate a world of environmental, political, and socio-economic instability, conflict, and possibly war, the question becomes what can one person do? Charles Bukowski, a Los Angeles author and poet, wrote, "You begin saving the world by saving one person at a time; all else is grandiose romanticism or politics" (13).

Every faith teaches that the way to peace is by taking accountability for one's own actions and trying to live a better life in accordance to God's commands. In Islam, this concept is what is meant by jihad or "struggle". The greatest struggle (Jihadi Akbar) is to reform oneself and turn back to God, who will be the ultimate Judge or Master of the Judgment Day (14).

Let us quote the Promised Messiah as our final thought on this subject for now:

"Henceforth the jihad of the sword is at an end, but the jihad of the cleansing of souls remains. These are not my words but this is the Will of God. I order all those who have entered my army to stop dwelling on these thoughts (of jihad by sword) but to purify their hearts, to excel in human kindness, to be sympathetic to the afflicted, to spread peace throughout the land, so that their faith will spread in turn. Do not wonder how this will happen. For just as God, in meeting physical needs without the means of common intervention, has used elements and all the things of the earth in the inventions of the present age ... similarly, God, without the help of human hands, will now use His Angels to fulfil our spiritual needs. May great heavenly signs be made manifest and many splendors created which will open people's eyes" (15).

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Concept of Natural Disasters in Hinduism

Dr Muhammad Zafar Iqbal

Natural disasters a natural phenomenon and follow the laws of nature. They have been mentioned throughout recorded human history. All communities and cultures in the world, civilized and primitive, theists and atheists, interpret these phenomena according to their own traditions and beliefs. All faith based scriptures mention about natural calamities, like earthquakes, floods, tsunamis, hurricanes, tornados, volcanos and interpret them in their own unique way. Common factor among all is that human misdeeds are at least partly to be blamed.

Hindus believe that it is the cruel, unjust and unrighteous acts of human beings that compel nature to settle its scores. Tit for Tat' is nature's permanent rule. A book by the scientists Peter Tompkins and Christopher Bird – 'The Secret life of Trees' makes a detailed analysis of this rule and proves that it is very much valid.

Hindus also believe that scientists who are forcing the nature to vomit its secrets by squeezing its throat are irreligious modern devils who cause destruction of nature without any heed for selfish purpose. They believe that cruelty, demoniac attitude, slaughter -houses, massacres and wars are closely related to earthquakes and that stopping these will stop earthquakes.

H.H. Gurudev Dr. Kateswamiji (Ghanagarjit) at hindujagru-ti.org/hinduism-for-kids writes that Hindus should raise their children with Hindu sanskars. He states,

"The sacred country named India had not seen earthquakes for thousands of years, given a few odd exceptions. But in the last ten years, India has witnessed four high scale earthquakes, four cyclones and six massive floods. So children, let us take an oath to follow righteous principles and win the confidence of Mother Nature" (1)

Hidus believe that God is this universe that is cyclical (big-bang – expansion – contraction to a state before the big bang- big bang again). This demarcates Hinduism as being thought to be pantheism to panentheism. This means that God is not just the universe but also something or the force that oversees itself or projects itself in the form



of this cyclical universe. Krishna said to Arjun to forget all attachment and guide himself through his karma and dharma.

In Hindu religious scripture, The Bhagavad-Gita, Lord Krishna is quoted to have said

"the Lord is you, me, your imagination, your enemies, your friends, relationships, mom, dad and everything you can see, imagine, and own and so on. God is just the universe itself, the evolutionary process where the fittest survive by killing the unfit... ." (2)

Many, but not all, Hindus believe that the universe goes through a cycle of four stages, and that we are in the most degenerate age, called Kali Yuga. Extensive violence and immorality permeate the culture.

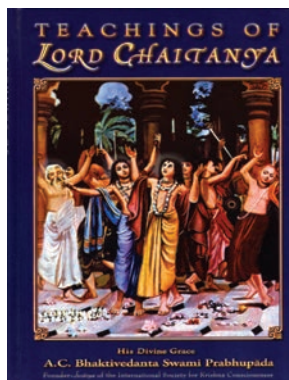
In response to South Asian Tsunami in December 2004 and its devastation resulting in tremendous life and property loss of primarily of the 'have not's here are responses of some of the religious figures of different faith communities.

Nadadur Vardhan, president of the Hindu Temple Society of Southern California, said that all Hindus believe that too many people were doing too many bad things. People have not lived up to what they are supposed to do — not helping people, not treating their parents well, not caring for the poor, going to war for unethical reasons.

Ariel Glucklich, a professor of theology at Georgetown University and a specialist in Hinduism said that the Gods of Hinduism were not responsible for the tragedy. They are "always unfailingly on the side of good." In both Hinduism and Buddhism, karma links a person's fate to actions in their present and previous lives.

Glucklich described that, "Karma is a "non-divine mechanism." That is, there is no deity keeping track of good and bad deeds in order to dole out rewards and punishment. In general, people are responsible for what happens to them. He described karma as also interactional, meaning that children who died in the tsunami might have died because of actions of their parents." (3)

Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada in his article "Natural Disasters" published at krishna.org on February 18th, 2016 writes that all schemes are only useless scraps of paper in the face of war, famine, earthquakes and other disasters. All these disasters are warnings from Mother Durga, and by them she confirms her eternal superiority over the illusioned plan makers.



Quoting from Teachings of Lord Caitanya, Ch 3, he writes,

"It is the duty of a disciple approaching a spiritual master to inquire about his constitutional position. In conformity to that spiritual process, Sanatana has already asked, "What am I, and why am I suffering from the threefold miseries?" (4)

Swami Prabhupada says that the threefold miseries are called adhyatmika, adhibhautika, and adhidaivika. The word adhyatmika refers to those miseries caused by the mind and body. Sometimes the living entity suffers bodily, and sometimes he is distressed mentally... . Miseries inflicted by other living entities are called adhibhautika. These living entities need not even be large, for there are many—such as bugs—that can make our lives miserable even while we are sleeping in bed. There are many insig-

nificant living entities, like cockroaches, that sometimes give us pain, and there are also other living entities who are born on different kinds of planets and who give us miseries.

As far as the adhidaivika miseries are concerned, these are natural disasters that originate with the demigods of the higher planets. Swami Prabhupada continues that we sometimes suffer from severe cold or hot weather, from a thunderbolt, or from earthquakes, tornadoes, droughts and many natural disasters. In any case, we are always suffering from either one or a combination of these three kinds of miseries.

In Hindu religion, on the topic of 'Blaming God for Your Problems or Suffering' there are two types of attitudes or beliefs that are associated with God. Both are popular and influence the lives of people.

1. I am an aspect of God: This approach acknowledges your spiritual nature as an eternal Self. If you believe that as an eternal soul you are an aspect of God and represent him upon earth, it follows that you have to reflect that attitude in every aspect of



your life and exemplify God in your thinking and conduct, performing his duties as if they are your own without any duality.

As a part of it, you have to cultivate divine qualities such as detachment, selflessness, purity, truthfulness, sameness, nonviolence, non-possession, equanimity, stability, etc., and reflect them in your thinking and actions....

Those who live their lives in this manner, transcending their desires and attachments, never find a reason to complain about anything. They accept the events and outcomes in their lives with equanimity.

This attitude resembles Islamic teaching where we are taught to reflect many attributes of God such as Merciful, Gracious, benevolent, Forgiver, Concealer of human faults.

2 God is my creator and controller:

In this approach, which is more popular, devotees put an onerous responsibility on God, believing that he is their Supreme Lord and controller and responsible for everything that happens to them. However, in most cases their devotion remains tainted by selfishness and egoism. If you want God to take care of your life, you must totally surrender to him and let him take responsibility for it,

accepting that whatever that happens to you without judgment and complaint.

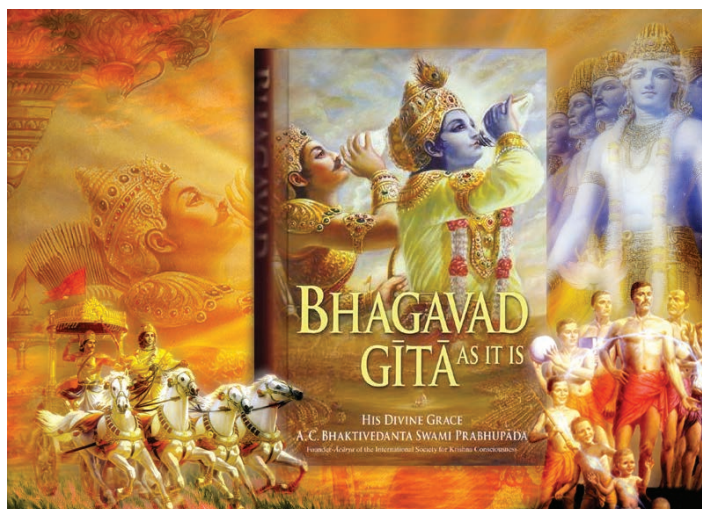
Jayaram V who have translated the Bhagavadgita twice. He comments on the Bhagavadgita's teaching on the topic of sorrow and sufferings. He writes that suffering arises from the fact that we live in a transient world and can take nothing for granted. Gain and loss are the twin aspects of life, from which we are never free. When we are attached to things, we experience attraction and aversion to them and gain and loss. We are thus caught in the whirlpool of life subject to duality and emotional instability.

However, sorrow is hidden in every aspect of human life, serves a great purpose in our lives. It opens our eyes to the harsh realities of life and makes us think about the nature of suffering, its causes and remedies, and the lessons one can learn from it. Arjuna suffered from an emotional trauma when he entered the battlefield of Kurukshetra. His suffering opened a new door of wisdom to him, when he opened his mind to Lord Krishna and expressed his concerns, doubts and fears to him.

Sorrow is also a great healer. When we are exposed to pain and suffering we look for the causes, and try to address them.

Jayaram V states,

"From the Bhagavadgita we learn that we can overcome suffering by performing righteous actions in the right manner, cultivating right knowledge that leads to liberation and practicing devotion which leads to the absorption of the mind in the thoughts of God. In this austere effort, detachment, renunciation, purification of the mind and body, intelligence, etc. are great facilitators." (5)



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God's Existence and Natural Disasters

Zia H Shah MD

Hurricane season in USA does not end until Nov. 30, but four major hurricanes — category 3 or greater — have already churned through the Atlantic, at the time of this writing in 2017. The meteorologists say more are likely on the way. Which hurricane seasons caused the most damage in USA? Hurricanes Harvey and Irma are expected to cost the U.S. between \$150 and \$200 billion in combined property damage, according to Moody's Analytics.(1) The higher figure would make this season the second costliest to date, just behind 2005, when Hurricanes Katrina, Dennis and Cindy left behind \$211 billion in damage, according to the National Hurricane Center. (2)

Are these punishments of God to USA for racism within its borders and aggressive foreign policy outside its borders? Or are these merely a result of climate change without any hidden message or strategy?

Some of us are focused on the question of suffering and worry how a Loving God could allow natural disasters that lead to death of innocent humans including young children? Others focus on the other side of the coin and question how a Loving God could allow repressive regimes to survive, who cause thousands if not millions of innocent people to die and suffer from air raids and other military interventions and dirty politics to serve their parochial agenda?

Allah had taken to task past nations of the prophets like, Noah, Moses, Lot, Shuaib and Salih, (may peace be on them all), for denying and ridiculing the messengers of God and utterly destroyed and annihilated them. The Quran is replete with mention of how God destroyed prior nations for their corruption through natural disasters.

"To the people of Midian We sent their brother Shu'ayb. He said, 'My people, serve God and think ahead to the Last Day. Do not commit evil and spread corruption in the land.' They rejected him and so the earthquake overtook them. When morning came, they were lying dead in their homes. Remember the tribes of 'Ad and Thamud: their history is made clear to you by what is left of their dwelling places. Satan made their foul deeds seem alluring to them and barred them from the right way, though they were capable of seeing. Remember Qarun and Pharaoh and Haman: Moses brought them clear signs, but they behaved arrogantly on earth. They could not escape Us

and We punished each one of them for their sins: some We struck with a violent storm; some were overcome by a sudden blast; some We made the earth swallow; and some We drowned. It was not God who wronged them; they wronged themselves." (3)

Why is not God destroying the Western civilization for not believing in Islam or the holy prophet Muhammad, may peace be on him? Wasn't he meant for Europe and USA also?

The natural disasters, these days, seem to be less destructive at least as far as fatalities are concerned, at least in the Western countries than in the past. The deadliest natural disaster in U.S. history is also the most fatal hurricane to date. In 1900, inaccurate predictions, combined with poor warning systems, left Galveston, Texas vulnerable to a hurricane that killed between 6,000 and 12,000 people. Twenty-eight years later, an estimated 2,500 people drowned when a Category 4 hurricane caused Lake Okeechobee in Florida to overflow, deluging the surrounding area with 10-to-15-foot floods.(4) The hurricanes in 2017 in USA have caused much less loss of life. Perhaps human planning and efforts help and point towards our free will.

So, is God still active in human history as He was in the past eras as mentioned in the holy Quran?

The prophet Muhammad, (may peace be on him), came for the whole world and even after 1400 years more than 4 billion of different faiths appear to be prospering, even though all of them deny him and some among them even ridicule him and his religion. Islamophobia is on the rise and the Muslims are on the receiving end rather than the non-Muslims. Is there a God, Who promised the victory of Islam?

Hundreds of thousands if not millions of innocent Iraqis and Syrians have died due to bombing by one entity or the other after President George W Bush invaded Iraq under the false pretense of weapons of mass destruction. Is there a God, Who will help and save the Muslims?

In World War I and World War II millions died in Europe, but at the end of these wars, USA, with more than 95% of its population Christian, came on the top and not any Muslim nation! Ottoman Empire was utterly destroyed and the British Empire

got to draw the maps in the Middle East along with the creation of Israel, for the European Jewish population. Is the God of Islam alive?

In 1492 in the year when Christopher Columbus allegedly discovered America, while people were already living here, each and every Muslim in Europe was either killed, banished or converted by force to Christianity.(5,6,7) Where was the God of the Muslims?

But remember, there were hardly any Muslims in Europe or America in the 18th or the 19th century, but now there are some 44 million in Europe according to the Pew Research Center estimates,(8) and they estimate that there were about 3.3 million Muslims of all ages living in the United States in 2015. (9)

The world is changing in favor of Islam, ever so gradually, even though it is not immediately apparent!

Notwithstanding several vulnerabilities of the Western civilization, the West has certainly been the creator of the industrial and the information age and it will be a great human loss if the West were to implode like the Roman Empire in the fourth and the fifth centuries. Here we are not only reassured by the human efforts in the broad spread of science and technology in our global village, but by the very word of God, the Holy Quran, promises that whatever is useful for humanity is given permanence in the world. The same God, who revealed the above verses about the destruction of the people of Median, 'Ad and Thamud, Pharaoh and other deniers of the prophets of God also revealed:

"He sends down water from the sky, so that valleys flow according to their measure, and the flood bears on its surface swelling foam. And from that which they heat in the fire, seeking to make ornaments or utensils, comes out a foam similar to it. Thus does Allah illustrate truth and falsehood. Now, as to the foam, it goes away as rubbish, but as to that which benefits men, it stays on the earth. Thus does Allah set forth parables."(10)

Whatever is frivolous in the Western civilization will fade away over time, but the useful and essential will be preserved as the sun of Islamic teachings will rise from the West, in the 21st and the 22nd century.

If we emphasize the literal reading of one set of verses or the other, we may get limited understanding of the Quranic message, on the other hand meditating on all the verses impinging on the issue under discussion in unison leads to an enlightened world-view.

One of the attributes of God is Al-Lateef or the Subtle. God



created human beings through the process of evolution spread over some 3.5 billion years and His plan to improve our humanity and our theology is not rushed, it is ever so subtle and gradual.

The hurricanes Harvey and Irma and others serve different purposes on different axes. These are reminders of global warming on the one hand but also have a purpose on the spiritual axis. They are there to humble us to remind us of our utter dependence on the Almighty Allah and in the larger scheme of affairs they will gradually move humanity to a better understanding of religion and better theology, more consistent with Islam than Christianity, and human compassion and coexistence. The Quran says:

"We did indeed send Messengers before thee and We made for them wives and children. It is not possible for a Messenger to bring a Sign except by the command of Allah. For every design there is an appointed term. Allah effaces what He wills and establishes what He wills; with Him is the source of all commandments. Whether We bring to pass during thy lifetime (Muhammad) some of that which We have designed for them, or whether We cause thee to die, it will all be fulfilled. Thy part is to convey the Message; it is for Us to make the reckoning. Do they not see that We are approaching from the borders of the land, reducing it as We proceed? Allah judges; no one has power to reverse His judgment. He is Swift in reckoning. Those who were before them also devised plans, but they came to naught. All planning belongs to Allah. He knows what everyone does. The disbelievers will soon know to whom belongs the true recompense of the ultimate resort. Those who disbelieve say: 'Thou art not a Messenger of Allah. Say to them: Sufficient is Allah as a Witness between you and me, and so also is he who possesses knowledge of the Book.'" (11)

If we look at the back side of a carpet or any tapestry, we see knots and a mumble jumble of threads going across and no pattern or beauty is apparent. Human life is very similar to this tapestry, our small triumphs, sufferings, the natural disasters, and the world affairs seem, as we look at them without the benefit of omniscience or long-term view of history, only a mumble jumble of events. But, turn the carpet and tapestry around, and you see a beautiful pattern. The two sides of the carpet are the best metaphor to understand God's plan for humanity. Two threads are used to weave a carpet, one of them is the human effort and free will, and the other is the Providence and sometimes the punishment of God through natural disasters. The pattern is not visible immediately to the untrained human eye, which is always looking at the rough side of the carpet, on our daily timescale. But to those gifted with wisdom and understanding of history, the finished side of the tapestry or the carpet is very visible, and they are all the more thankful to God, for their world-view.

God is achieving His purpose and His design for the humanity, just like a beautifully woven tapestry or a carpet. He is leading us to a better theology, even accepting the contributions by atheists, and a better coexistence and a better understanding of human compassion, human rights, and women rights. In centuries to come, as we keep progressing, some will call it a victory of Islam over other religions and others will call it just a better and more rational world.



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Women's Space

Humanity First: Role of Ahmadi Muslim Women

Nudrat Salik

Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (rh), the fourth Caliph of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community envisioned the original concept of Humanity First in his Friday Sermon dated August 28, 1992. Referring to the state of suffering of Somalian people due to starvation and hunger, he said that just the thought of the torment and starvation that the people are suffering there makes one restless. Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has tried to help the people in Somalia. Since relief organizations and means of services are also under the control of western nations, despite all our efforts we have been unable to deliver the aid to them. Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (rh) said that eventually we handed over our aid to the sources of these organizations so that the people of Somalia can be helped somehow. He advised all the members of the community to help the Somalian people not as Muslims but as human beings. He further said that the time has now come that the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community should set up its own independent international humanitarian service organization similar to the Red Cross, other international or faith based organizations. It would work under the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community's principles of righteousness and justice in serving humanity without distinction of race, religion, ethnic or national origins. Anyone who wants to serve humanity will be able to join this organization as a volunteer or to help financially (1).

It was under this guidance that Humanity First became a registered charity initially in the UK in 1995 and subsequently in the USA in 2004. Since inception, Humanity First USA has served in disaster and human development areas within the US as well as in several other countries around the world almost entirely by volunteers. Humanity First's mission is to relieve suffering caused by natural disasters or human conflict, promote peace and understanding, and strengthen people's capacity to help themselves.

The greatest strength of Humanity First USA remains its pool of volunteers who are willing to donate their precious time for humanitarian efforts around the world. The volunteer base includes doctors, nurses and other health care professionals, engineers, IT professionals, lawyers, marketing/web design and accountants. On average, Humanity First USA receives \$200,000 worth of professional services donated on an annual basis, with this amount reaching as high as \$830,000 in one year. One significant continuous source of this volunteer base has been the women and young girls, between the ages of 7 and 15, of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's Association USA as an auxiliary organization under the guidance and encouragement of the National President has provided invaluable support to Humanity First USA both in terms of raising funds and as encouraging its membership to get involved in the organization. Dedicated women volunteers are involved in every level of Humanity First USA, including the management of day to day operations. Currently 2 of the 10 current Board members are women, including one position held by the National President of the Ahmadiyya Women's Association and multiple key director positions including program director positions. Some areas where women are taking active roles include, "Our Kids Our Future" educational projects, director of Humanity First Student Organizations, Social Media director, and Finance director.

The work of Humanity First USA is broken down into categories: Disaster Relief and Human development projects.



Disaster Relief

Humanity First USA has responded to disasters in various parts of the world, including the Haiti Earthquake, the South Asian Earthquake, and Tsunami in Indonesia, as well as disasters at home including Hurricanes Charlie and Katrina. In 2017, we have had a record number of US disasters all across the country, which Humanity First USA has been able to respond to due to its dedicated volunteers. Most recently, we have provided disaster relief efforts for Hurricane Harvey in Texas and Hurricane Irma in Florida. Humanity First USA's primary response in these Hurricanes was to provide "Search & Rescue" service in which we rescued survivors stranded in flooded homes and neighborhoods, distributed Emergency Relief Supplies including health and hygiene products, clothing, blankets, pillows and other necessities, gave meals, and provided Recovery Cleanup where we help homeowners with the gutting and cleaning of their homes. For Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's Association from Houston, Dallas, Austin, and Orlando were an essential part of these disaster relief efforts. Ahmadi Muslim women spent countless hours cooking food, distributing supplies, and gathering information about the needs of those impacted by the hurricanes. In addition, many women volunteers were directly involved in the cleanup efforts of homes that were destroyed. Immediately after these Hurricanes, Northern California was impacted with wildfires which have also claimed multiple lives and caused tremendous destruction. Currently the various chapters of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's Association in California, including Silicon Valley, are working to provide help to shelters housing those impacted by this devastation.

Disaster Relief Efforts have also been led by women volunteers of Humanity First USA. Most recently in January 2017, when tornadoes hit Albany, Georgia our local Atlanta director visited the areas impacted to assess the local needs of the communities and determine the best way for Humanity First to help. In December 2015, when tornadoes hit the Dallas-Fort Worth area, our Humanity First Disaster Response team led by our Gulf Regional director, who is a member of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's Association, were amongst the first to respond to provide disaster relief by helping homeowners with debris cleanup and distributing food and non-food essential items. In addition, our New York regional director was one of the key leading forces in our Hurricane Sandy relief efforts in 2012 in which Humanity First served more than 9,000 meals as well as gutted and cleaned over 80 houses damaged by water.

Human Development

Restoring Communities and Building a Future are the guiding principles for Humanity First USA. The organization assists people afflicted by natural disasters, war, and poverty by first providing disaster relief services and then by building capacity of the impacted communities, which is referred to as Human Development. The aim is to restore dignity by providing the resources to help people get back on their feet quickly. The key projects the Ahmadi Muslim women volunteers are directly involved in the US are medical missions, "Food for Life", and "Our Kids Our Future".

Medical Missions

The "Gift of Health" program is part of Humanity First's broader vision to provide primary health care in areas deprived of preventive and medical needs. In 2016 alone, four "Gift of Health" missions took place in Guatemala and resulted in serving over 7,800 patients. Multiple women doctors, nurses, students and other general volunteers took off from work, school, and other obligations to participate in these typically one-week missions in which medical camps are set-up in rural communities with the support of the local Humanity First team. The camps include general medicine, dental, and pediatric clinics as well as a mobile pharmacy where patients receive free medicine, supplies, donations, and hygiene kits along with education.

Humanity First USA has also held eight women's health specific missions to Guatemala and two to Mexico, which have all been led by a member of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's Association. During these missions, the team educates under-served women in relevant topics like women's nutrition, pelvic infections, pregnancy complications, domestic violence, and mental health, as well as provides critical screenings for cervical cancer/pelvic infections.

The World Health Organization's latest assessment indicates that cataracts are responsible for 51% of world blindness, which represents about 20 million people (2010). Cataract remains the leading cause of blindness and though they can be surgically removed, many do not have access to this surgery (2). Our "Gift of Sight" missions, which are co-led by women ophthalmologists, are held to provide this access. In 2016, our "Gift of Sight" mission to Guatemala was able to perform 70 cataract surgeries.

Food for Life

Feeding our fellow Americans is a key initiative for Humanity First USA. Each year since 2008, the number of food-insecure people in the United States has hovered between 46 million and 50 million, approximately one in six people in the country (3). The USDA defines "food insecurity" as the lack of access, at times, to enough food for all household members. Humanity First USA currently provides recurring soup kitchen services in Dayton, Philadelphia, and Zion as well as runs Food Pantry Programs in Atlanta, Central Jersey, Chicago East, Dallas, Miami, Portland, Seattle, and Silicon Valley. The members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's Association are the key organizers of the Zion, Atlanta, Dallas, Portland, Seattle and Silicon Valley locations. At least a 1,000 needy people are being served in these areas.

Our Kids Our Future

Under this program, Humanity First believes that every individual has the right to an education and through these projects aims to eliminate disparities in education based on gender, economic status or any other basis. Thus, the organization has created equal educational opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds. Our women members, residing in various cities, have identified underserved schools in their areas. In addition to providing funds to these schools, through these dedicated volunteers, Humanity First USA has provided hands on assistance. For example, the Portland chapter of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association has done numerous "Our Kids Our Future" programs at schools in Vancouver, Washington, which included providing tutoring, volunteering at parent/child reading events, conducting container garden projects where parents and kids plant veggies in pots to take home to provide supplemental food during the summer holidays. Humanity First USA also sponsored an "Early Bird Literacy Program" to encourage parent involvement in their child's education through "Muffins with Moms" and "Donuts with Dads". During this program, games were provided to encourage family play time as well as books so that each child could take home a book.

Fundraising

Humanity First USA has grown from \$402,000 in revenues in 2004 to \$2.3 million in 2016. The members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association have used many creative ways to raise funds for the causes of Humanity First USA. Our young girls of Portland chapter decided to Adopt a Well and fundraise locally to sponsor water wells in other countries. In addition to bake sales, the girls took on a recycling project to raise funds in



which water bottles/soda cans were collected, and taken to the recycling center. Ahmadi Muslim women across the US including Dallas, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Atlanta, and Virginia have also organized Bazaars, which in one year alone raised almost \$50,000. In 2015, Humanity First USA launched a flagship project to establish the 22-bed Nasir Hospital in Guatemala. The entire Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was urged to contribute. In addition to many individual women members, many chapters made extraordinary efforts to help raise funds for this project. Specifically, the members of North Jersey, LA Inland, New Orleans, and Hartford chapters were able to raise at least \$2,500, representing one unit, which is equivalent to a hospital bed or some component of the hospital.

Humanity First Student Organizations (HFSOs)

HFSOs are registered student organizations at various universities in the US who dedicate their efforts to support the mission of Humanity First. Currently these organizations have been established at 19 universities and 7 high schools, of which members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community have taken the lead at 7 universities and 5 high schools. The HFSOs have conducted numerous programs in their local areas including conducting a financial literacy course (University of Connecticut) and organizing medical missions (University of Michigan). Even at the high school level, these organizations have been very active in fundraising for Humanity First. Riverside High School in Virginia was able to collect much needed supplies for Haiti schools.

The dedicated volunteers of Humanity First USA, including the members of Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's Association, are the forces behind the good works that the organization is able to deliver with the Grace of God. May God bless the many dedicated volunteers of Humanity First USA and enable them to continue to serve humanity.

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NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS

BBC

NEWS

Triple talaq: India considers jail for 'instant divorce'

Husbands who attempt "instant divorce" could be sentenced to three years in prison under draft legislation being considered in India.

The traditional practice involves a Muslim man saying "talaq" (divorce) three times - in any form, including email or text message.

It was declared unconstitutional by India's Supreme Court in August, but officials say it has continued since.

The proposed law also provides for fines and support for affected women.

The draft Muslim Women Protection of Rights on Marriage Bill has now been sent to regional governments for consultation.

It would explicitly ban "triple talaq", in line with the Supreme Court ruling, and lay out procedures legal procedures for a "subsistence allowance" and custody arrangements, the Press Trust of India said.

Those provisions have been made "to ensure that in case the husband asks the wife to leave the house she should have legal protection," it quoted a high-level official as saying.



Under the current draft, people suspected of the offence would not be eligible for bail.

It would also ban the practice in any form - including in writing, or by text message.

Indian news outlets said the legislation is due to be considered during the winter parliamentary sessions, which begins in mid-December.

Muslims are India's largest minority group, and it is one of a few countries where the practice of triple talaq - which has no basis in the Koran - has survived. The Supreme Court ruling came after five women petitions the court, arguing the traditional practice violated their fundamental rights.

The court ruled 3-2 in their favour, and labelled it "un-Islamic".

Despite dubious claims, manuka honey may be antibiotic powerhouse

By Nural Cokcetin and Shona Blair, The Conversation



Manuka honey is often touted as a "superfood" that treats many ailments, including allergies, colds and flus, gingivitis, sore throats, staph infections, and numerous types of wounds.

Manuka can apparently also boost energy, "detox" your system, lower cholesterol, stave off diabetes, improve sleep, increase skin tone, reduce hair loss and even prevent frizz and split ends.

Some of these claims are nonsense, but some have good evidence behind them.

Honey has been used therapeutically throughout history, with records of its cultural, religious and medicinal importance shown in rock paintings, carvings and sacred texts from many diverse ancient cultures.

Honey was used to treat a wide range of ailments from eye and throat infections to gastroenteritis and respiratory ailments, but it was persistently popular as a treatment for numerous types of wounds and skin infections.

Medicinal honey largely fell from favor with the advent of modern antibiotics in the mid-20th century. Western medicine largely dismissed it as a "worthless but harmless substance". But the emergence of superbugs

(pathogens resistant to some, many or even all of our antibiotics) means alternative approaches to dealing with pathogens are being scientifically investigated.

We now understand the traditional popularity of honey as a wound dressing is almost certainly due to its antimicrobial properties. High sugar content and low pH mean honey inhibits microbial growth, but certain honeys still retain their antimicrobial activity when these are diluted to negligible levels.

Many different types of honey also produce microbe-killing levels of hydrogen peroxide when glucose oxidase (an enzyme incorporated into honey by bees) reacts with glucose and oxygen molecules in water. So, when honey is used as a wound dressing it draws moisture from the tissues, and this reacts to produce hydrogen peroxide, clearing the wound of infection.

The antimicrobial activity of different honeys varies greatly, depending on which flowers the bees visit to collect the nectar they turn into honey. While all honeys possess some level of antimicrobial activity, certain ones are up to 100 times more active than others.

How is manuka different to other honey?

Manuka honey is derived from the nectar of manuka (Leptospermum scoparium) trees, and it has an additional component to its potent antimicrobial activity. This unusual activity was discovered by Professor Peter Molan, in New Zealand in the 1980s, when he realized the action of manuka honey remained even after hydrogen peroxide was removed.

The cause of this activity remained elusive for many years, until two laboratories independently identified methylglyoxal (MGO) as a key active component in manuka honey in 2008. MGO is a substance that occurs naturally in many foods, plants and animal cells and it has antimicrobial activity.

Australia has more than 80 species of native Leptospermum, while New Zealand has one, but the "manuka" honeys from each country have similar properties. There is currently a great deal of debate between the two countries over the rights to use the name "manuka", but for simplicity in this article we use the term to

describe active *Leptospermum* honeys from either country.

Can manuka honey kill superbugs?

The activity of manuka honey has been tested against a diverse range of microbes, particularly those that cause wound infections, and it inhibits problematic bacterial pathogens, including superbugs that are resistant to multiple antibiotics.

Manuka honey can also disperse and kill bacteria living in biofilms (communities of microbes notoriously resistant to antibiotics), including ones of *Streptococcus* (the cause of strep throat) and *Staphylococcus* (the cause of Golden staph infections).

Crucially, there are no reported cases of bacteria developing resistance to honey, nor can manuka or other honey resistance be generated in the laboratory.

It's important to note that the amount of MGO in different manuka honeys varies, and not all manuka honeys necessarily have high levels of antimicrobial activity.

Manuka honey and wound healing

Honey has ideal wound dressing properties, and there have been numerous studies looking at the efficacy of manuka as a wound dressing. Apart from its broad-spectrum antimicrobial activity, honey is also non-toxic to mammalian cells, helps to maintain a moist wound environment (which is beneficial for healing), has anti-inflammatory activity, reduces healing time and scarring, has a natural debriding action (which draws dead tissues, foreign bodies and dead immune cells from the wound) and also reduces wound odor. These properties account for many of the reports showing the effectiveness of honey as a wound dressing.

Honey, and in particular manuka honey, has successfully been used to treat infected and non-infected wounds, burns, surgical incisions, leg ulcers, pressure sores, traumatic injuries, meningococcal lesions, side effects from radiotherapy and gingivitis.

What about eating manuka honey?

Most of the manuka honey sold globally is eaten. Manuka may inhibit the bacteria that cause a sore ("strep") throat or gingivitis, but the main components responsible for the antimicrobial activity won't survive the digestion process.

Nonetheless, honey consumption can have other therapeutic benefits, including anti-inflammatory, anti-oxidant and prebiotic (promoting the growth of beneficial intestinal microorganisms) properties. Although, these properties are not solely linked to manuka honey and various other honeys may also work.

What doesn't it do?

There is a commonly touted belief that eating manuka (or

local) honey will help with hay fever because it contains small doses of the pollens that are causing the symptoms, and eating this in small quantities will help your immune system learn not to overreact.

But there's no scientific evidence eating honey helps hay fever sufferers. Most of the pollen that causes hay fever comes from plants that are wind pollinated (so they don't produce nectar and are not visited by bees).

There is some preliminary work showing honey might protect from some side effects of radiation treatment to the head and neck that warrants further investigation. But other claims honey has anti-cancer activity are yet to be substantiated.

There isn't any robust scientific evidence that manuka lowers cholesterol, treats diabetes or improves sleep. Although one interesting study did show honey was more effective than cough medicine for reducing night time coughs of children, improving their sleep (and their parents'). Manuka honey wasn't used specifically, but it may well be as helpful.

Claims that anything helps to "detox" are innately ridiculous. Similarly "superfood" is more about marketing than much else, and the cosmetic and anti-ageing claims about manuka are scientifically unfounded.

Final verdict

If consumers are buying manuka honey for general daily use as a food or tonic, there is no need to buy the more active and therefore more expensive types. But the right kind of honey is very effective as a wound dressing. So if manuka is to be used to treat wounds or skin infections, it should be active, sterile and appropriately packaged as a medicinal product.

The best way to ensure this is to check the product has a CE mark or it's registered with the Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration (marked with an AUST L/AUST R number). Manuka honey isn't a panacea or a superfood. But it is grossly underutilized as a topical treatment for wounds, ulcers and burns, particularly in the face of the looming global superbug crisis.

poetry CORNER

Foretelling of Great Earthquake

By Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian
The Promised Messiah and Mahdi (as)

Ye people, sound asleep -
Wake up, make haste,
Arise! This is not the time
To be wasted in slumber;
My heart is harrowed
With anxiety, over
The grave tidings,
In Revelation conveyed
To me, by the Lord God!

The earth I perceive
Turned completely upside
Down, in the earthquake!
The hour is nigh;
The deluge is poised
For a swift and sudden leap!
For the righteous, however,
The gracious God, Himself,
Does stand by the wayside,
To help them in the difficult
Moment; and the good
Have nothing to fear, even though
The whirlpool is the most terrible,
In power and proportions!

Translation by Sufi A. Q. Niaz



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Muslim Sunrise Vol. XXV No. 3, 1953

The Object of Life and How to Attain It

By Hazrat Mizra Bashiruddin Mahmood Ahmad (ra), Hazrat Khlifatul Masih II,
Head of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam.

Recently a Hindu gentleman asked the following two questions from Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II, Head of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam:

How to attain peace of mind?

What is the object of creating mortal man in this transitory world?

We give below the English translation of Hazrat's reply.

As a matter of fact, these two questions are related to each other and the second one must in reality, be put first and the first one second. Therefore, I will take up the second question first.

The truth is that the world is without doubt subject to destruction but man is not mortal in the sense in which it is generally understood. The soul which is the principal part of man is immortal. It only moves from one place to another. And even in this world man always moves from place to place. According to the teachings of Islam, nobody is subject to destruction. After death all people will be transported to another world where they will live. Those who will be weak and whose spirituality will not have created such powers as will enable them to meet the Creator of all things and the great souls which have established relationship with Him, will at first be made to stay in a place where spiritual treatment will be administered to them. According to the terminology of the Holy Quran such a place is called Jahannam – fire or hell. They will remain there for a long or short period in accordance with their disease and they will be taken out of it as they will be restored to health and translated to the place which the Holy

Quran calls Jannat – garden, paradise or heaven. There they will be vouchsafed with the vision of God, nearness to Him and spiritual perfection.

According to this interpretation, man is not perishable. He has come to this world in order to complete his education as classes in the school are meant for the completion of man's education. His temporary residence in the school does by no means prove that the school is useless. It only proves that the student has finished his studies. Now he is on the threshold of a new life where he will utilize what he learnt in the school. This worldly life stands in the same relation to the life after death as the school life does to the post-school life of action. Hence, the mortality of this worldly life is a mercy rather than a punishment or anguish. How painful would it be for the student, were he to remain confined to school all his life!

How to attain peace of mind? This is the second question. It must be remembered that peace of mind can be attained through the achievement of the object of one's desire. For example you are in the dark and you want to read a book for which you need light. You will remain uneasy until you are provided with light. You will have peace of mind only when you get light. Or suppose, you are hungry. You will be ill at ease, so long as you do not get food. When you will be served with food and eat, you will be relieved of the uneasiness and will have peace of mind. In short, there are only two ways for the attainment of peace of mind. In the first place, you gain peace of mind when your needs are satisfied. Secondly, by realizing that your need is imagi-

nary, not real. Some children entertain the desire to see the fairies or magic tricks. So long as they consider these things real and profitable they are anxious to get them and become troubled if they fail to get them. But when they grow old and discover the unreality and uselessness of these things, they no longer desire to have them nor do they become distressed by their failure to get them. In short, peace of mind can be attained either by the fulfilment of heart's desires; or by wiping out the unreal and useless desires. Peace of mind can be attained only when such desires remain in the heart which are really good and are fulfilled. The Holy Quran says that God created man so that he may develop divine qualities in him. The Holy Quran also says that whoever makes an earnest effort in this regard God undertakes to help him to accomplish this supreme purpose. In other words, according to the Holy Quran, God holds Himself responsible to help man find peace of mind.

The first thing which the Holy Quran teaches us is that man must keep the lofty purpose in view for which he is created, namely, he must develop in him the divine attributes or in other words, he must become, so to speak, a mirror wherein God's image may be seen. Secondly, the Holy Quran teaches us that God does certainly grant success to those who make sincere endeavors in order to achieve this end. It is clear that when man understands this deep secret, that he is not mortal, so he must not entertain insatiable desire to gain these transitory things, when man comes to understand that he is mortal only physically, that it, only his body is mortal, so it is all right for him to exert himself for the acquisition of these perishable objects to a certain extent. But his soul is immortal so he must

devote himself to the development of immortal moral qualities, and by God's help, he becomes successful in the achievement of the object for which he strives. As his desire is fulfilled, he gains peace of mind. On the contrary, if a man hops around the branches of three like a monkey, forgets his immortal and eternal existence and seeks for the enjoyment of transitory pleasures of the mortal body, then he will fall victim to so many desires that it will be impossible for him to fulfill them and draw divine help in order to gain them. The number of his failures and disappointments will far exceed that of his successes. He will fail to attain peace of mind.

No doubt God gives some people a goodly share of concentration of mind. These people strive to attain various objects, political, educational and cultural and as a result of continuous efforts, they gain success in their objectives and attain to the peace of mind as well. But this peace of mind can be compared to the pleasure which children derive when they get toys. They get this peace of mind not by the achievement of the high objects of their life but by forgetting them. They fall victims to the intellectual opium. Their brains feed intellectual opium to them. They do have pain but cannot feel it.



Questions & Answers

What the World Owes to the Holy Qur'an? (1)

It is a bounty of the Holy Qur'an upon mankind that it has set forth the distinction between man's natural state and moral qualities, and that it does not stop merely at leading man from his natural conditions to the elevated palace of high moral qualities but also upon the doors of the holy understanding that leads man to the spiritual heights. In this way it sets forth in an excellent manner the three types of teaching that we have already mentioned. As it comprehends all the teachings, which are necessary for religious training, it claims it has discharged this function to perfection. It says: "This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favor upon you and have chosen for you Islam as religion." (2)

This means the climax of religion has been reached in Islam, which is that a person should be committed wholly to God and should seek his salvation through the sacrifice of his self in the cause of God, and not through any other means, and should demonstrate this motive and determination in his conduct. This is the stage at which all excellences arrive at their perfection. Thus, the Holy Qur'an has presented the God Who was not identified by the philosophers. The Qur'an has adopted two methods for the understanding of God. First, the method whereby the human reason is strengthened and illuminated for the purpose of setting forth reasons in support of the existence of God, and thus saves a person from falling into error. Secondly, the spiritual method. Different people, being shortsighted and lacking high resolve, appoint different purposes for their lives and limit themselves to worldly goals and ambitions. But the purpose that God Almighty has appointed for man in His Holy Word is as follows: "And I have not created the Jinn and the men but

that they may worship Me." (3) Thus, the true purpose of man's life is the worship of God, His understanding and complete devotion to Him.

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